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GEORGE SAND'S NOVELS

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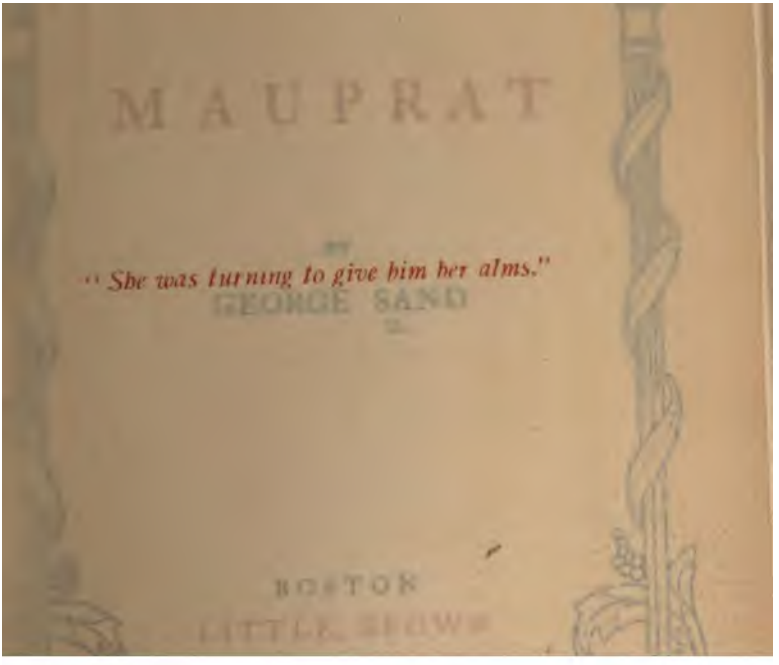
MAUPRAT

MAUPRAT

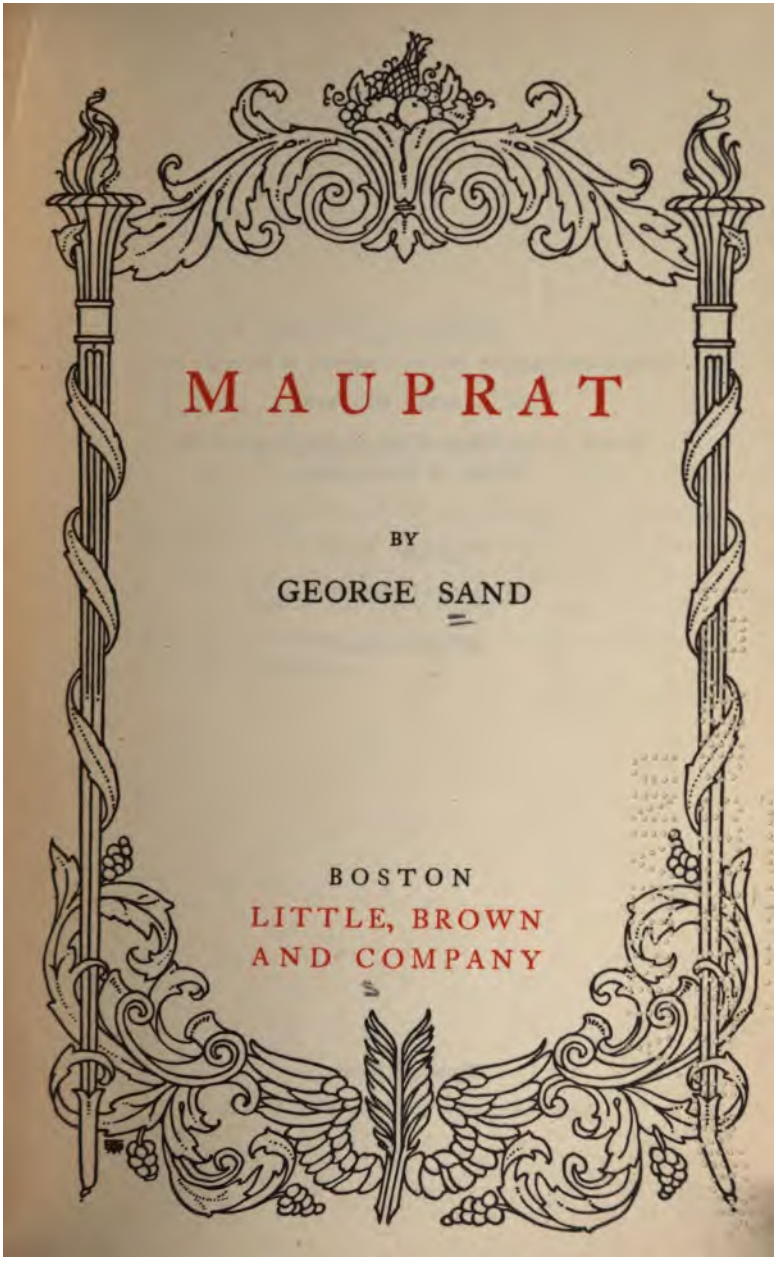


"She was turning to give him her alms."

GEORGE SAND

BOSTON

LITTLE, BROWN



MAUPRAT

BY

GEORGE SAND

BOSTON
LITTLE, BROWN
AND COMPANY

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DEDICATION.

TO GUSTAVE PAPET.

ALTHOUGH fashion may forbid the patriarchal custom of dedications, I beg you, brother and friend, to accept that of a tale which is not new to you. I collected the materials for it, partly, in the huts of our Noire Valley. I wish we could live and die there, repeating every evening our favorite invocation, —"*Sancta Simplicitas!*"

GEORGE SAND.

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PREFACE.

I WROTE the romance of MAUPRAT at Nohant, in 1846, if I remember correctly, just after I had been suing for a divorce. Hitherto I had been attacking the abuses of marriage, and, perhaps from not having sufficiently developed my views, had occasioned the opinion that I did not appreciate its essence; but it was precisely at this time that it appeared to me in all its original moral beauty.

Misery teaches those who can reflect: having learned from my own experience how painful and sad it is to have to break such ties, the conviction was forced upon me that marriage, to be anything more than a mere name, must embody principles of happiness and justice which are too elevated in their nature for actual society to be interested about them. Society tries, on the other hand, to degrade this sacred institution, by likening it to a civil contract; it attacks it on all sides at once, by its spirit and manners, by its prejudices and hypocritical incredulity.

While composing a romance to occupy and distract

my mind, it occurred to me to paint an eternal, exclusive love, — a love inspired before, and continuing during and after marriage. I made the hero of my book, therefore, declare, at eighty years of age, his fidelity to the only woman whom he had loved.

The ideal of love is certainly eternal fidelity. Religious and moral laws have sought to consecrate this ideal: material facts trouble it, civil laws often render it impossible or illusory; but this is not the place to prove it. The romance of Mauprat is not a didactic exposition of these opinions; but the sentiment with which I was specially penetrated at the time when it was written may be summed up in these words, spoken by Mauprat towards the end of the work: "She was the only woman whom I have ever loved; never did any other attract my gaze, or know the pressure of my hand."

GEORGE SAND.

MAUPRAT.

ON the borders of Marche and Berry, in a province called Varenne, which is little more than a vast heath intersected with forests of oak and chestnut, in the most thickly-wooded and unfrequented part of the country, a small ruined chateau, whose dilapidated turrets cannot be seen more than a hundred steps from the principal portcullis, lies hidden in the depths of a ravine. The aged trees that surround this ruin, and the scattered rocks that tower over it, bury it in perpetual obscurity; even in broad daylight it is scarcely possible to cross the deserted path that leads to it, without stumbling against the gnarled trunks and rubbish that obstruct every step. This sombre ravine and melancholy chateau are called la Roche Mauprat.

Not long ago the last of the Mauprats, the heir of this property, had the chateau unroofed, and the timber sold; then, as if wishing to give a final blow to the memory of his ancestors, he had the main entrance thrown down, the northern tower gutted, and the outer walls dismantled and breached, and departed with his workmen, shaking the dust from his feet, and abandoning his ancestral domain to eagles, foxes and vipers. Since that time, the wood-cutters and charcoal burners who live in the huts scattered through the neighborhood, when they pass the ravine of la Roche Mauprat in the daytime, whistle boldly, or hurl down upon the ruins some energetic malediction; but when day is declining, and the evening wind begins to moan through the high loop-holes of the turrets, they hurry by in *silence*, and every now and then

ɔss themselves, to exorcise the evil spirits who reign ɐr this haunted spot.

For my part, I acknowledge that I have never gone by s ravine after dark without feeling a sort of uneasiness, nor would I dare affirm upon oath that I have not plunged the spur into my horse, on certain stormy nights, to rid myself more quickly of the disagreeable impression made upon me by this neighborhood.

In fact, in my childhood, the name of Mauprat occupied a place between those of Cartouche and Blue Beard; and I have often confounded, in frightful dreams, old legends of Ogre and Croquemitaine, with quite recent events, which have given the Mauprat family a sinister renown in our province.

Often, too, on hunting excursions, when my comrades and myself, weary of lying in wait for game, have gone to warm ourselves at the beds of burning charcoal which the workmen watch all night, I have heard this fatal name die upon their lips at our approach; and when they had recognized us, and were well assured that we were not accompanied by the spectre of one of these brigands, they related, in whispers, stories that made our hair stand on end; stories, moreover, which I shall be very careful not to communicate to you, regretting, as I do, that they should have saddened and darkened my own memory.

Not that the story I am proposing to tell you is precisely agreeable and cheerful. I ask your pardon, on the contrary, for sending you such a gloomy narrative; but, in the impression which it has made upon me, there is something so consoling, and, if I may dare express myself thus, so heathful to the soul, that you will excuse me, I trust, upon that account. Besides, I have just heard this story related; you ask me for a novel: the temptation is too much for my indolence or my sterility.

It was only last week that I finally met Bernard Mauprat, the last of his family; the same Mauprat who, after separating himself long since from his infamous relatives, sought to prove, by the destruction of his manor, the horror with which the recollections of his childhood inspired him. This Bernard is one of the

most highly-esteemed men in the country; he lives in a pretty country-seat on the plain near Chateauroux. Finding myself near his house, with one of my friends who knows him, I expressed the desire to see him; and my friend promising me a kind reception, conducted me to his house without delay.

I was already familiar with the general features of this old man's remarkable history, but I have always earnestly desired to hear the details of his story, and above all to hear them from his own lips. For me his strange destiny was a philosophical problem that I longed to solve. I observed, therefore, his features, his manners, and his household, with a peculiar interest.

Bernard Mauprat is not less than eighty years old, although his robust health, erect figure, firm step, and entire freedom from all the infirmities of age, make him appear fifteen or twenty years younger. I should have thought his face extremely beautiful, had it not been for a certain hard expression, which, in spite of myself, made the shades of his ancestors pass before my eyes. I greatly fear that he resembles them physically. He alone could have informed us, for neither my friend nor myself have ever seen any of the Mauprats; but we were very careful not to ask the question.

It seemed to us that his servants waited upon him with an alacrity and punctuality wonderful for rustic valets. Nevertheless, at the least appearance of delay, he raised his voice, knit his brows, — which were still very black under his white hair, — and muttered words that gave the slowest of them wings. At first I was rather shocked; there was too much of the Mauprat, I thought, in his style of proceeding. But the gentle and almost paternal manner in which he spoke to his people a moment after, and their zeal, which was evidently very different from fear, soon reconciled me to him. He treated us, besides, with the most exquisite politeness, and expressed himself in the most choice language. Unfortunately, at the end of the dinner, the servants neglected to close a door, and a cold draught blew upon his head, extorting from him such a terrible oath, that my

friend and I exchanged a glance of surprise. He perceived it.

"Pardon me, gentlemen!" he said; "I see plainly that you find my manners unequal: and yet you have little to complain of; I am an old branch happily detached from a wretched trunk, and transplanted into good soil, but always rude and gnarled, like the wild holly of the original stock. I have had great difficulty in attaining my present state of comparative gentleness and tranquillity. Alas! if I dared, I would reproach Providence bitterly for one thing: and that is, for having made my life as short as that of other men. When a man must struggle for forty or fifty years to change himself from a wolf into a human being, he should be allowed to live a hundred years longer to enjoy his victory. But what good would that do me now?" he added, with an accent of deep sadness. "The fairy who transformed me is no longer here to enjoy her work. Bah! it is time to have done with life."

He turned towards me, and gazed upon me with his large and strangely animated black eyes.

"Well, my little youth," he said, "I know what brings you here: you are curious to hear my history. Come to the fire, and do not be alarmed; I will not mistake you for a fagot, and throw you into the flames, although I am a Mauprat. You cannot do me a greater pleasure, indeed, than by listening to me. Your friend will tell you, notwithstanding, that I do not readily speak of myself; I am too much afraid of bestowing my confidence upon fools; but I have heard you spoken of,—I know your character and profession: you are an observer and a narrator; that is to say—excuse me—you are curious and a gossip."

He began to laugh, and I forced myself to join him, although I was beginning to fear that he was mocking us; and, in spite of myself, thought of the savage jokes that his grandfather had amused himself by playing upon unfortunates curious and imprudent enough to visit him. Bernard soon reassured me; putting his arm amicably under mine, he made me sit down before a good fire, near a table covered with cups.

"Don't be angry!" he said; "I cannot, at my age, cure the hereditary irony; but I am not ferocious. To speak seriously, I am delighted to receive you, and to confide to you the history of my life. A man so unfortunate as I have been deserves to find a faithful historian, who will wash his memory from all reproach. Listen, then, and drink your coffee."

I offered him a cup in silence: he refused it with a gesture and smile that seemed to say, "That is an indulgence suited to your effeminate generation."

Then he began his narrative in the following terms: —

I.

YOU do not live far from la Roche Mauprat, and must often have passed that gloomy ruin; it is not necessary, therefore, for me to describe it to you. All that I need tell you is, that it has never been so agreeable an abode as at present. On the day when the chateau was unroofed at my command, the sun illumined, for the first time, the damp walls that had imprisoned my childhood; and the lizards, to which I abandoned them, are much better lodged than I ever was. They can at least behold the light of day, and warm their cold limbs in the radiance of the noonday sun.

There was an elder and a younger branch of the Mauprat family. I belong to the elder branch. My grandfather was that old Tristan de Mauprat who wasted his fortune, dishonored his name, and who was so wicked, in short, that his memory is already associated with the marvellous. The peasants still believe that they see his spectre, which, according to them, appears alternately in the form of a sorcerer, who points out to malefactors the road to the dwellings of Varenne, and in that of an old white hare, that becomes visible to persons tempted to commit a crime. The younger branch of the family, when I came into the world, had only one representative, — M. Hubert de Mauprat, who was called the chevalier, because he belonged

to the Order of Malta, and who was as well known for his good qualities as his cousin for his bad ones. Youngest of the family, he devoted himself to a life of celibacy; but, left the sole survivor of several brothers and sisters, he had his vows annulled, and, the year before I was born, married. Before taking this step, he made great efforts, it was said, to find an heir in the elder branch worthy to redeem its dishonored name, and to preserve the fortune which, in the hands of his own family, had prospered. He tried to arrange his cousin Tristan's affairs, and several times pacified his creditors. But, finding that his bounty only served to foster the vices of this family, — finding that they repaid him, not with gratitude and deference, but with secret hatred and coarse jealousy, — he broke off all communication with his cousins, and, in spite of his advanced age (he was more than sixty years old), married, to obtain heirs. He had one daughter, and with her his hope of posterity terminated; his wife died soon after the child's birth, of a violent malady, which the physicians called *colique de miserere*. He left the country after this event, and only returned at rare intervals to visit his estates, which were situated about six leagues from la Roche Mauprat, on the borders of Varenne du Fromental. This man was wise and just, because he was enlightened; because his father, instead of opposing the spirit of the age, had given him an education in harmony with it. He retained, however, a firm character and daring spirit; and, like his ancestors, took pride in bearing the chivalric surname of *Casse Tête*, hereditary in the ancient line of the Mauprats, instead of a Christian name. As for the elder branch, it had turned out so badly, or rather had retained such habits of feudal brigandage, that it had received the surname Mauprat *Coupe-Jarret*. My father, who was Tristan's oldest son, was the only one of the family who married. I was his only child. And here I must mention a fact which I did not learn until I had grown up. Hubert de Mauprat, on learning of my birth, urged my parents to let him adopt me, promising that he would make me his heir, if he was given absolute control of my education. My

father was killed by an accident at a hunt at this epoch, and my grandfather refused the offer of the chevalier, on the ground that his children were the only legitimate heirs of the younger branch, and that he would oppose, therefore, with all his power, an entail in my favor. It was then that Hubert's daughter was born. Seven years later, the desire which all the noblemen of that period felt to perpetuate their names, induced him to renew his offer to my mother. I do not know what her reply was; she fell ill and died. The physicians of the country pronounced her disease, also, the *colique de miserere*. My grandfather had stayed at her house the last two days that she passed in this world.

"Pour me out a glass of Spanish wine," he said, interrupting himself; "I am growing cold. 'Tis nothing: nothing but the chill that freezes my veins when I begin to speak of the recollections of my childhood. It will pass."

He swallowed a large goblet of wine, and we followed his example, for we also had grown cold as we gazed upon his stern countenance, and listened to his gloomy tale. He continued:

Thus it was that I became an orphan at seven years old. My grandfather, after robbing my mother's house of all the money and goods that he could carry away, declared that he had no wish to get into trouble with the lawyers, and departed without waiting for the dead to be buried. Seizing me by the collar of my jacket, he threw me upon the crupper of his horse, saying,—

"Now then, my lad, come and try your fortune with me, and be sparing of your tears; for I have none too much patience with babies."

In fact, after a few seconds, he began to beat me so vigorously with his riding-whip, that I hushed my cries, and withdrawing into myself like the tortoise under his shell, made the rest of the journey without daring to breathe.

He was a large old man, bony and squint-eyed. I imagine I can see him still as he appeared to me then, for this evening has left ineffaceable traces upon my mind.

My mother had often told me of her execrable father-in-law and his brigands of sons, and it gave a sudden and terrible reality to the terror with which her wild tales had inspired me. The moon was shining, I remember, and ever and anon bright rays glanced through the thick foliage of the forest. My grandfather's horse was as large, strong, and bony as himself. Rapid as a flash, he leaped the ravines and boiling torrents that intersect Varenne in all directions. At each leap I lost my equilibrium, and clung, terrified, to the horse, or to my grandfather's coat. As for him, he troubled himself so little about me, that I doubt whether he would have taken the pains to pick me up, if I had fallen off. Sometimes, perceiving my terror, he taunted me with it, and, to increase it, made his horse caracole anew. Twenty times I was completely discouraged, and came very near letting myself fall, but the instinctive love of life prevented me from yielding to despair. Finally, towards midnight, we stopped abruptly at a small iron gate, and soon the drawbridge was raised behind us. My grandfather took me from the horse, bathed in a cold sweat, and threw me into the arms of a young man, lame and hideous. This was my uncle Jean, and I was at la Roche Mauprat.

My grandfather, at this time, with his eight sons, was the last remaining specimen in our province of a race of petty feudal tyrants by whom France had been infested for many ages. Civilization, which was rapidly marching towards the great struggle of the Revolution, had already abolished, in a great measure, the exactions and robberies of these organized brigands. The light of education, a sort of good taste, the distant reflection of a gallant court, and perhaps the presentiment of a near and terrible awakening of the people, had penetrated the chateaux of the nobility throughout the country, and had even reached the half rustic abodes of the country squires. The remote position of our provinces made them exceedingly backward, and yet even here the sentiment of social equity was beginning to triumph over barbarous customs. More than one scoundrel of a nobleman had been forced to amend his ways, in spite of his privileges; and, in

certain places, the peasants, driven to extremity, had taken justice into their own hands, and had assassinated their seigneur without being called to account for their audacity; the courts had not dreamed of meddling with the affair, and the relatives of the victim had not dared to demand justice.

In spite of this disposition on the part of the people, my grandfather succeeded in maintaining his position for a long time, without meeting a formidable resistance; but, as he had a numerous family to bring up, all of whom were provided, like himself, with a goodly number of vices, the time came at last when he found himself tormented and pursued by an army of creditors whom his menaces no longer terrified, and who threatened, in their turn, to bring him into difficulty. It was necessary for him to form a plan for avoiding legal proceedings on the one hand, and for putting an end, on the other, to the incessant quarrels to which each instant gave rise, and in which the Mauprats, in spite of their numbers, their concord, and their herculean force, no longer shone, as the whole population joined those who insulted them, and made it a point of duty to stone them. Tristan proved equal to the occasion. Rallying his offspring about him, as the wild boar, after the chase, collects her scattered young, he retired to his castle, raised the drawbridge, and shutting himself up with ten or a dozen peasants, his valets, — all poachers and deserters, who, as well as their masters, had an interest in withdrawing from the world (that was his expression), and putting themselves in safety behind strong walls, — he declared himself in a state of siege. An enormous pile of arms, guns, pistols, fowling pieces, carbines, clubs, and knives, were arranged upon a platform by the main portcullis, and the porter was commanded not to allow more than two persons to approach within range of his gun.

From that day Mauprat and his children renounced their allegiance to civil laws, as they had long since cut themselves loose from moral obligations. They formed themselves into a band of adventurers. While their hirelings and feudal poachers provided the house with

game, they laid illegal taxes on the surrounding farms. Without being cowards (they were far enough from this), our peasants, as you know, are gentle and timid out of indifference, and from their distrust of the law, which they have never been able to comprehend, and even now know scarcely anything about. No province of France has preserved its old traditions so faithfully as Varenne, or has endured longer the abuses of feudalism. Nowhere else, perhaps, have noblemen retained their seignorial rights to such an extent as they have retained them here hitherto, and nowhere is it so easy to terrify the people by the intelligence of some absurd and impossible political event. At the time to which I refer, the Mauprats, the only powerful family in a region of country far removed from cities, and having scarcely any communication with the surrounding provinces, had no difficulty in persuading their vassals that serfdom was about being reestablished, and that the refractory would be roughly handled. The peasants hesitated: the boldest among them preached independence; but the rest, after listening with anxiety, and reflecting upon what they heard, resolved to submit. The Mauprats did not demand money. The peasant of these provinces finds it exceedingly difficult to collect even small sums of money, and he parts from it with extreme reluctance. *Money is dear*, is one of his proverbs, for it represents to his mind something more than manual labor. Money, to him, means commerce with the outside world; an effort of foresight and caution, — a progressive step,— a sort of intellectual struggle elevating him above his indolent and careless habits; in a word, it means the labor of the spirit, and this, for the peasant, is the most painful and disquieting sort of labor.

The Mauprats knew the country well; and having no longer any great need of money, as they had given up all thought of paying their debts, they were content to demand commodities. One farmer paid his tax in hats, another in cattle, a third furnished corn, a fourth provender, and so with the rest. Careful to levy contributions with discernment, they demanded from each vassal the tribute

which he could give with least inconvenience; they promised aid and protection to all, and, in a certain sense, they kept their word. They destroyed wolves and foxes, they received and concealed deserters, and aided in defrauding the state by intimidating the officers of the custom-house and the tax-collectors.

Taking advantage of the good-nature of the poor, they deceived them as to their true interests, and corrupted their simple minds by robbing them of liberty and self-respect. They forced the whole country to join them in the sort of rebellion against the law which they had organized, and they so terrified the officers whose duty it was to make it respected, that it fell, in a few years, into actual desuetude; so that while the rest of France was rapidly advancing towards the enfranchisement of the lower classes, Varenne, retrograding with equal rapidity, fell again under the yoke of the nobility. It was easy for the Mauprats to pervert these poor people. They assumed popular manners, so as to contrast favorably with the other noblemen of the province, who retained all their ancient hauteur, although their power was on the wane. My grandfather, above all, lost no opportunity of inspiring the peasants with his hatred of his cousin Hubert de Mauprat. While the latter gave audience to his vassals seated in his arm-chair, and required them to stand before him with uncovered heads, Tristan let them sit at his table; he drank with them the wine they brought him in voluntary homage, and had them reconducted to their homes by his own people in the middle of the night, raving drunk, carrying torches, and making the forests resound with obscene songs. Libertinism completed the demoralization of the peasants. The Mauprats soon became acquainted with all the families in the country, who tolerated them because they found a profit in doing so; also, alas! — must it be confessed? — because to associate with their superiors flattered their vanity. The isolation of their dwellings favored the evil. Hence they had no fear of scandal or censure. In the smallest village public opinion would have exerted a restraining influence, but here there were only scattered huts and lonely farms;

forest and heath separated these poor families so widely, that they could not hold each other in check. Shame is more potent than conscience. It is useless to tell you what numerous and infamous ties were established between masters and slaves; debauchery, exaction and bankruptcy were the examples set me, and the lessons taught me in my youth, and my teachers and guides led a joyous life. They ridiculed all justice, they paid their creditors neither principal nor interest, they beat the officers of the law who ventured to come to collect their taxes, they shot the *maréchaussée* who approached too near their turrets; they cursed the parliament, men imbued with new ideas, and the younger branch of the Mauprat family, calling down upon them the pest, famine, death, and they gave themselves all the airs of paladins of the twelfth century. My grandfather talked of nothing but his genealogy, and the prowess of his ancestors; he regretted the good old times when noblemen's castles were furnished with instruments of torture, dungeons, and, above all, cannon. He was far from being satisfied with our supply of arms, although, with the help of a culverin, which my uncle Jean aimed with remarkable skill, they had proved sufficient, hitherto, to strike terror into the wretched military force of the province.

II.

THIS old Mauprat was a carnivorous and perfidious animal, midway between the wolf and the fox. He was gifted with a ready and copious flow of language, and had a varnish of education that sharpened his natural cunning. He affected great politeness, and seldom failed to deceive the objects of his vengeance. He would lure them to his chateau, and make them submit to frightful torments, which, in default of witnesses, it would be impossible for them to prove in court. His villanous schemes were planned and executed with such remarkable ingenuity, that the whole country was struck with a con-

sternation that almost resembled respect. Above all, it proved impossible to seize him outside of his den, although he left it frequently, and apparently without much precaution. He was a man who had a genius for evil, and although his sons felt no affection for him — of that they were incapable — they submitted to the ascendency of his detestable superiority, and obeyed him with a discipline and punctuality that was almost fanatical. He was their savior in all desperate emergencies; and when ennui, born of seclusion, began to take possession of them, facetiously ferocious, he warded it off by performances worthy a cavern of robbers. Sometimes they amused themselves by tormenting and terrifying poor mendicant monks: they singed their beards, let them down into wells, and held them suspended between life and death, until they chanted an obscene song, or uttered a blasphemy. The whole country knew the adventure of the notary who went to the chateau with four officers, to serve a writ, and who was not only allowed to enter, but was received with the most ostentatious politeness. My grandfather pretended to consent with a good grace to the service of their execution, and helped them to make an inventory of his furniture, the sale of which had been decreed. After this, dinner was served, and the king's officers were seated at the table, when Tristan said to the notary, —

"Ah! *Mon Dieu!* I have forgotten a poor jade of a horse in one of my stables. It is no great matter; still, you may be reprimanded for having omitted it, and as I see you are an honest fellow, I will not get you into trouble. Come and look at it; it will only take a moment."

The notary followed him unsuspiciously; and as they were about to enter the stable, Mauprat, who was in advance, cried out that it would be enough if he would put out his head and look in. The lawyer, who did not insist upon examining things scrupulously, as he was anxious to show great indulgence in discharging his office, did as he was requested. Mauprat immediately shut the door, jamming the neck of the unhappy wretch

so violently between its sharp edge and the wall, that he could not breathe. When he thought he had been sufficiently punished, Tristan reopened the door, asked pardon with much civility for his inadvertence, and offered the lawyer his arm, to reconduct him to the table; a compliment which the latter did not think it advisable to refuse. As soon, however, as he gained the hall where his comrades were seated, he threw himself into a chair, showed them his livid face and bleeding neck, and telling them of the snare into which he had been betrayed, called upon them to arrest their treacherous host. Then it was that my grandfather, abandoning himself completely to his satirical humor, improvised a farce in which he played a singular and audacious part. Gravely reproaching the notary for accusing him unjustly, and taking pains to address him with great politeness and gentleness, he called upon his companions to witness his good conduct, and supplicated them to excuse him if his precarious position prevented him from receiving them with more distinction, and from doing the honors of his dinner in a more splendid style. The poor notary dared not contradict him, and was forced to dine, although half dead. His comrades were so completely duped by Mauprat's assurances, that they gayly ate and drank, while treating the notary as a fool or knave. They departed from la Roche Mauprat drunk, singing the praises of the seigneur, and mocking the lawyer, who fell dead upon the threshold of his house as he dismounted from his horse.

Mauprat's eight sons, the pride and strength of the old man, all resembled him alike in physical strength, in the brutality of their manners, and more or less in the mocking and malicious character of their wit. It must be confessed that they were thorough villains! They were capable of every sort of wickedness, but when called upon to comprehend a noble idea or good action, they seemed suddenly transformed into complete idiots; and yet their desperate courage sometimes seemed to me not without a certain grandeur. But it is time to tell you of myself, to give you some idea of the development of my soul in the depths of the unclean mire in which it

pleased heaven to plunge me when I had scarcely left my cradle.

It would be wrong in me to claim, in order to persuade you to regard me with pity during the first few years of my life, that I was born with a noble organization and a pure and incorruptible soul. I do not know, sir, how this may have been. It may be that there are incorruptible souls, and it may be otherwise. Neither you nor any other person will ever know. There is no more important question to be solved than this: "Are our propensities invincible, or is it in the power of education to modify, and perhaps even to destroy them?" For my part I dare not decide; I am neither a metaphysician, nor a psychologist, nor a philosopher; but I have had a terrible life, gentlemen; and, were I a legislator, I would cut out the tongue, or cut off the arms of the man who dared preach or write that the organization of an individual is fatal, — that the character of a man can no more be re-created than the appetite of a tiger. God has preserved me from such a belief.

All that I can tell you is, that my mother taught me good sentiments, although I may not naturally have had good qualities. With her I was already violent, and my violence was sombre and concentrated. I was blind and brutal in anger, distrustful even to cowardice at the approach of danger, bold even to folly when engaged in the actual struggle with it; that is to say, my love of life made me at the same time timid and brave. My obstinacy was inflexible; my mother alone could succeed in subduing me, and I obeyed her without reasoning, through a sort of magnetic necessity, for my intelligence was very backward in its development. With this single influence, which I well remember, and that of one other woman who was my guide in after years, there was, and would have continued to be, the means of training me up well. But my mother died before she was able to instruct me seriously in anything, and when I was transplanted to la Roche Mauprat, the wickedness that I saw there inspired me with a merely instinctive repugnance, which would, perhaps, have been sufficiently feeble, if it had not been intensified by fear.

I thank heaven, from the bottom of my heart, for the horrible treatment that I received there, and, above all, for the hatred which my uncle Jean conceived for me. My misery preserved me from indifference to evil, and my wrongs helped me to abhor those by whom it was committed.

This Jean was certainly the most detestable of his race: a fall from his horse had made him deformed, and his wicked disposition had been embittered by his inability to do as much harm as his companions. Obliged to remain at home when the others departed on their expeditions, for he could not mount on horseback, he had no pleasure excepting during the petty and useless assaults which the *maréchaussée*,* as if from a sense of duty, occasionally made upon the chateau. Intrenched behind a stone rampart which he had built for his convenience, Jean, on such occasions, seated quietly by his culverin, shot down a gendarme from time to time, and suddenly recovered, he said, the repose and peace of mind of which he had been deprived by inaction. Nor did he always await an attack before climbing his dear bulwark. Crouching down, like a cat on the watch, he hid there at times for hours; and when a pedestrian appeared in the distance without making the accustomed signal, he took skilful aim, and forced him to turn back upon his route. That he called sweeping the road with a broom.

Too young to follow my uncles in their hunting and marauding expeditions, Jean naturally became my guardian and instructor, — that is to say, my jailer and executioner. I will not relate the details of this infernal existence. For almost ten years I suffered cold, hunger, insult, imprisonment and blows, according to the caprices, more or less ferocious, of this monster. The chief cause of his hatred was, that he could not succeed in depraving me. My rude, obstinate, and savage character preserved me from his vile seductions. Possibly I had no force in me for virtue, but happily I had for hate. Rather than

*An armed and mounted rural police, with a sort of military organization.

please my tyrant I would have suffered a thousand deaths, and thus I grew up without conceiving a taste for vice. Notwithstanding, I had such strange ideas of society, that I did not feel any horror of my uncle's trade. Brought up behind the walls of la Roche Mauprat, and living in a state of perpetual siege; I thought and felt, as you can easily imagine, precisely like a soldier of the barbarous feudal ages. Outside our den, our deeds were called assassinating, robbing, and torturing; I had been taught to call them fighting, conquering, and subduing. Instead of history, I learned the legends and ballads of chivalry, which my grandfather related to me in the evenings when he had time to think of what he called my education; and, when I questioned him about the present age, he replied that the times had greatly changed, that all Frenchmen had become traitors and felons, that they had terrified their kings, and that the kings had weakly abandoned the nobility, which, in its turn, had had the cowardice to renounce its privileges, and allow laws to be made by clodhoppers. I listened with surprise, and almost with indignation, to this description of the epoch in which I lived,—for me an indefinable epoch. Chronology was not my grandfather's strong point, and there were no books of any kind at la Roche Mauprat, excepting, perhaps, the history of the Sons of Aymon, and a few chronicles of the same sort brought by our valets from the country fairs. Three names alone vaguely floated in the chaos of my ignorance, — Charlemagne, Louis XI., and Louis XIV.; and these I remembered because my grandfather frequently introduced them in his commentaries upon the misunderstood rights of the nobility. In fact, I scarcely knew the difference between a reign and a race; and I was far from being sure that my grandfather had not seen Charlemagne, since he spoke of him more frequently and more willingly than of the others.

But, at the same time that my instinctive energy made me admire the warlike deeds of my uncles, and inspired me with a desire to imitate them, the cold cruelties which I saw them practise on returning from their campaigns, and the acts of perfidy by means of which they en-

ticed dupes to their abode, in order to levy contributions upon them or torture them, caused me strange and painful emotions, of which, speaking in all sincerity, it would be difficult for me to render a clear account. In the absence of all principle of morality, it would have seemed natural for me to accept that of the right of the strongest, which I saw put in practice; but the humiliations, the sufferings, which my uncle Jean had inflicted upon me in the name of this right, had taught me that it was not to be trusted. I comprehended the right of the bravest, and sincerely did I despise those who accepted life, although able to die, at the price of the outrages which they were compelled to endure at la Roche Mauprat. These insults, these outrages inflicted upon prisoners, upon women, upon children, could only proceed, it seemed to me, from sanguinary appetites. I do not know whether I was good and susceptible enough to feel true pity for these victims, but it is certain that I felt that selfish commiseration which is found even in the rudest natures, and which, developed and ennobled, has become charity among civilized men. Rude and ignorant, my emotions undoubtedly were mere spasms of fear and disgust at the aspect of torments which, from one day to another, at the least caprice of my tyrants, I might be called upon to suffer upon my own account; and so much the more as Jean, when he saw me grow pale at these frightful spectacles, was in the habit of saying, with a bantering air, —

"So I will do to you when you disobey."

All that I know is that I experienced a frightful uneasiness when compelled to witness these iniquitous actions; my blood congealed in my veins, my throat was parched, and I fled, so as not to repeat the cries which fell upon my ear. With time, however, I became less susceptible to these terrible impressions. The fibre of my nature hardened, and habit gave me strength to conceal my cowardice, as it was called. I felt ashamed of betraying my weakness, and forced my face to assume the hyena smile that I saw on the faces of my relatives. The women who were dragged, half willingly, half through

force, under the roof of la Roche Mauprat, caused me inconceivable trouble. The fire of youth was beginning to glow in my veins, and I cast an envious glance upon this part of my uncle's booty; but with these growing desires mingled inexpressible agonies. All those who surrounded me looked upon women as objects of scorn; I made vain efforts to separate this idea from that of the pleasure that solicited me. My brain was bewildered, and my irritated nerves imparted a violent and morbid tone to all my sensations.

In other respects my character was as rude and perverse as that of my companions; if my heart was better than theirs, my manners were not less arrogant, nor my jokes in better taste. One of my youthful adventures, giving an idea of my character, it will be worth while to relate here, especially as its consequences have exerted an influence upon my whole life.

III.

YOU must have seen an isolated old tower that stands in the densest part of the forest, about three leagues from la Roche Mauprat, in the direction of Fromental, and that has long been celebrated as the scene of a tragedy of former days. About a century ago the jailer of this tower, while making his rounds, hung a prisoner without any legal warrant, to please an old Mauprat, his seigneur.

At the time to which I refer, Gazeau Tower was already abandoned, and falling into decay. It was the property of the State; and more out of forgetfulness than benevolence, an old hermit, a great original, living completely alone, and known in the country as *Bonhomme* Patience, had been allowed to make it his retreat.

"I have heard him spoken of by my nurse's grandmother," I said; "she considered him a sorcerer."

Precisely; and since we are upon this subject, I may as well tell you what sort of man Patience really was, for

I shall have occasion to speak of him more than once in the course of my narrative, and I have had every opportunity of knowing him thoroughly.

Patience was a rustic philosopher; heaven had endowed him with a remarkable intelligence, but he lacked education, and, through a strange sort of fatality, his mind had refused to assimilate the little instruction that he had been in a position to receive. He went to school to the Carmelite monastery of * * *, and, instead of feeling and showing an aptitude for his studies, he had played the truant with more delight than any of his comrades. His nature was eminently contemplative, gentle, and indolent, and yet he was proud, and had a savage love of independence. Although religious, he was an enemy to forms; he was somewhat quarrelsome, was extremely suspicious, and, above all, was implacable in his hatred of hypocrisy. The observances of the cloister did not impose upon him, and he was driven from the school for telling the monks frankly what he thought of them, on one or two occasions. From this time he became the bitter enemy of the monkery, as he called the institution, and declared openly in favor of the Curé de Briantes, who was accused of being a Jansenist. The curé, however, succeeded no better than the monks in teaching Patience. The young peasant, although endowed with herculean strength and an ardent love of knowledge, showed an insurmountable aversion for every sort of labor, whether physical or intellectual. He professed a natural philosophy to which the curé found it very difficult to reply. "The only necessity for labor," he said, "arose from the necessity for money; and those who had moderate wants had no need of money." Patience practised what he preached; at the age when the passions are most ungovernable, his manners were austere; he drank nothing but water, he never entered a public-house, he did not know how to dance, and was awkward and timid with women, among whom, moreover, his eccentric character, severe countenance, and satirical disposition, made him extremely unpopular. Either to avenge himself for their dislike by his scorn, or to console himself by his wisdom, he took

pleasure, like Diogenes of old, in disparaging the vain pleasures of the young; and if he ever appeared under the green arbors of rustic fêtes, it was only to give utterance to some biting jeer, — a lightning flash of his inexorable good sense. Sometimes, also, he expressed his intolerant morality in a harsh manner, casting a cloud of sadness or terror over the troubled consciences of those who listened to him. By pursuing this course he made bitter enemies; and the efforts of a foolish hatred, together with the astonishment excited by his eccentric conduct, drew upon him the reputation of being a sorcerer.

When I said that Patience lacked education, I expressed myself incorrectly. Eager to comprehend the profound mysteries of nature, he wished to scale heaven at a single bound. In his very first lessons the Jansenist priest was so troubled and terrified by the audacity of his pupil, he had to use so many arguments to soothe and subdue him, and was compelled to sustain such an assault of bold questions and fearless objections, that he had no leisure to teach him the alphabet; and at the end of ten years, during which his studies were interrupted and resumed according to caprice or necessity, Patience did not know how to read. It was only with great difficulty that he could decipher a page in two hours, and even then he did not understand the meaning of most of the words expressing abstract ideas. And yet the ideas themselves he comprehended intuitively; it was easy to see that his mind was thoroughly imbued by them, and his way of translating his elevated thoughts into rustic language, animated by a rude poetry, was so remarkable, that it was impossible to hear him without being divided between admiration and merriment.

He, always grave, always absolute, refused to compromise with any form of logic. A stoic by nature and by principle, enthusiastic in propagating his doctrine of freedom from worldly passions, and constant in the practice of resignation, he opened regular breaching batteries upon the poor curé, and it was in these discussions, as he has often told me in the closing years of his life, that he gained his knowledge of philosophy. To resist the blows of the

battering-ram of the peasant's natural logic, the good Jansenist was forced to invoke the testimony of all the fathers of the church; and to oppose them, and often even to corroborate them with the erudition of all the sages and savans of antiquity. Then the great round eyes of Patience started from his head (that was his expression), while his words died upon his lips. Delighted to learn without the trouble of studying, he implored his teacher to explain at length the doctrine of these great men, and to relate their lives. The curé, observing his silence and attention, imagined that the victory was his. But at the very moment when he felt most assured that he had convinced this rebellious soul, Patience, hearing, perhaps, the village clock strike midnight, — the signal for his departure, — would rise, take leave of his host, and, reconducted by him to the threshold of the parsonage, would fill him with consternation by uttering some laconic and sarcastic reflection, confounding alike St. Jerome and Plato, Eusebius as completely as Seneca, Tertullius no less than Aristotle.

The curé did not fully acknowledge the superiority of this uncultivated intelligence, and he was greatly astonished, therefore, to find that he could pass so many winter evenings at his fireside with this peasant, without being the least bored or fatigued. He asked himself why it was that he enjoyed his society so much, while the village school-teacher, and even the prior of the convent, although they understood Greek and Latin, always appeared to him, the one tiresome, and the other sophistical, in their discourse. He knew the purity of the peasant's life, and he explained the ascendency of his mind, by attributing it to the power and charm which virtue exercises. Each evening, also, he humbly accused himself before God of not having disputed with his pupil from a sufficiently Christian point of view. He confessed to his guardian angel that his pride in his own learning, and the pleasure he had tasted in being listened to so devoutly, had carried him a little beyond the limits to which, as a religious instructor, he should have confined himself; that he had cited too complaisantly from profane authors;

and had even found a dangerous pleasure in wandering with his disciple in the fields of the past, and in plucking thence pagan flowers, whose fragrance, as they had never been moistened by baptismal water, a priest should not have allowed himself to inhale with so much delight.

Upon his side, Patience was devoted to the curé. He was his only friend, — the only tie that bound him to society; the only one, also, uniting him, through the light of science, to God. The peasant greatly exaggerated the learning of his pastor; he did not know that even the most enlightened men frequently misconstrue, or utterly fail to comprehend, the progress of human knowledge. Patience would have been saved great mental suffering if he could have discovered, with certainty, that his master was frequently in the wrong; that it was the man, and not the truth, that was at fault. Not knowing this, and finding that the experience of ages did not agree with his innate sense of justice, he fell a prey to continual reveries. He lived completely alone, and wandering through the country at all hours of the day and night, absorbed in preoccupations incomprehensible to his associates, confirmed more and more the tales of sorcery related against him.

The convent had no affection for the pastor. Several of the monks whom Patience had unmasked, hated the peasant. The pastor and his pupil were persecuted. The ignorant monks did not hesitate to propose accusing the curé before his bishop of devoting himself to forbidden sciences in concert with the magician Patience. A sort of religious war arose in the village, and in the neighboring country. All who were not for the convent were for the curé, and *vice versa*. Patience disdained to take part in this struggle. One morning he went, weeping, to embrace his friend, and said to him, —

"You are the only person in the world whom I love, and I will not cause you to be persecuted. Since, besides you, I know and love no one, I shall go and live in the woods, like a primitive man. I have inherited one field, which brings me an income of fifty francs; this is the only spot of earth that I have ever tilled with my own

hands; half my miserable income I have employed in paying the tithe of labor which I owe my seigneur, and I hope to die without having performed the part of a beast of burden for any man. Notwithstanding, if you are suspended from your office, if your income is taken from you, and you have a field to be ploughed, say the word, and you will see that my arm has not been benumbed by inaction."

The pastor sought in vain to change his determination. Patience departed, taking no baggage with him excepting the clothes on his back, and an abridgment of the philosophy of Epictetus, a work for which he had a great partiality, and in which, thanks to his frequent studies, he could succeed in reading three pages a day without inordinate fatigue. The rustic anchorite went to live in the desert. At first he built himself a hut of green boughs in the forest; but soon, besieged by the wolves, he took refuge in the lower hall of Gazeau Tower, which he furnished splendidly, with a bed of moss and some trunks of trees; while, with roots, wild fruit, and the milk of a goat, he laid a table very little inferior to that which he had had in the village. This is not exaggerated. The peasants of certain parts of Varenne must be seen before you can form an idea of the state of ascetic sobriety in which a man can live, and preserve his health. And, even in a country where the customs were thus stoical, Patience was exceptional in his habits. Wine had never moistened his lips, and bread had always seemed to him a superfluity. He was not averse, moreover, to the doctrines of Pythagoras. In the rare interviews that he had with his friend at this time, he informed him that, without precisely believing in metempsychosis, and without making it a rule to adhere to a vegetable diet, he experienced involuntarily a secret joy in following this regimen, and in having no further occasion to witness the daily slaughter of innocent animals.

Patience formed this strange resolution when he was forty years old. He was sixty when I saw him for the first time, and he still enjoyed extraordinary physical strength. Each year he was in the habit of going on

walking expeditions, to which I will refer elsewhere; for, in proportion as I relate my life, it will be necessary for me to enter into the details of the monastic life of Patience.

The forest patroles persecuted Patience a long time, but finally (at the epoch to which I am referring), not so much out of compassion as from their fear of his practices in sorcery, they gave him full permission to occupy Gazeau Tower. At the same time they informed him that it would be very likely to fall on his head during the first violent storm; a warning to which Patience replied, philosophically, that the first tree of the forest would destroy him as effectually, if it was his destiny to be crushed, as the walls of Gazeau Tower.

Before bringing my actor Patience upon the stage, and while asking your pardon for the length of this preliminary biography, I ought also to inform you that the mind of the curé, in the course of these twenty years, had taken a new direction. He loved philosophy, and, in spite of himself, the good man extended his liking to the philosophers themselves; even the least orthodox of them. The works of Jean Jacques Rousseau, especially, although he resisted their influence, transported him into new regions. One morning, as he was returning from a visit to some sick persons, he met Patience, who was gathering herbs for his dinner on the rocks of Crevant, and, seating himself near him on a druidical stone, he made, without knowing it, the profession of faith of the *Vicaire Savoyard.* Patience accepted this poetic religion much more readily than he had done the old orthodoxy. The pleasure with which he listened to a synopsis of the new doctrines, induced the curé to appoint rendezvous in isolated parts of Varenne, where they agreed to meet, as if by chance. The imagination of Patience had remained fresh and ardent in solitude, and in these secret interviews it was kindled by the inspiration of ideas, and hopes which at that time were fermenting throughout France, from the Court of Versailles to the most uninhabited heath. He fell in love with Jean Jacques, and

listened to as many of his writings as the cure could read to him without neglecting his duties. Then he begged for a copy of the *Contract Social*, and went to spell it out uninterruptedly at Gazeau Tower. At first the curé had only communicated this manna to his disciple with reservations; while allowing him to admire the great thoughts and noble sentiments of the philosopher, he had tried to put him on his guard against the dangers of anarchy. But all his old authority, all the happy citations of former years, in a word, all the theology of the good priest was swept away, like a fragile bridge by a swollen stream, by the torrent of savage eloquence and impetuous enthusiasm which Patience had accumulated in the desert. The priest was forced to yield, and fall back terrified upon himself; and when this happened he found his spiritual jurisdiction undermined, and crumbling in all parts. The new sun rising on the political horizon, and bewildering so many minds, melted his doubts as a light snow is melted by the first breath of spring. The enthusiasm of the peasant, the spectacle of his strange and poetic life giving him an inspired air, the romantic turn which their secret relations had taken (the contemptible persecutions of the monks had ennobled the spirit of revolt), all these things took such a hold upon the priest, that in 1770 he had already left Jansenism far behind him, and vainly sought, in any of the religious heresies known to him, a resting-place, where he could pause before falling into the abyss of philosophy, so often opened to him by Patience, and so often closed in vain by the exorcisms of Roman theology.

IV.

AFTER this account of the philosophical life of Patience, as I now understand it (Bernard continued after a pause), I find some difficulty in realizing the very different impression that I received of him in my boyhood, when I met the sorcerer of Gazeau Tower. I will force

myself, however, to reproduce my recollections faithfully.

It was one summer evening, as I was returning from a bird-hunt, accompanied by several little peasants, that I passed Gazeau Tower for the first time. I was about thirteen years old, and was larger and stronger than any of my companions, over whom, besides, I exerted rigorously the authority of my seignorial prerogatives. There was a blending of familiarity and etiquette in our intercourse, which was sufficiently absurd. Sometimes, when the passion for hunting or fatigue had completely mastered them, to the prejudice of my authority, I would be forced to yield my wishes to theirs; and I had already learned to give up my point at the right moment, as tyrants do, so that I might never seem forced to surrender it; but I took my revenge on such occasions, and soon saw them trembling before the odious name of my family.

It was growing dark, and we hurried gayly on, whistling, knocking down crab-apples with stones, and imitating the cries of birds, when the boy who was in front suddenly stopped, and, returning, declared that he would not go by the path, as it passed Gazeau Tower, and that he would take a short cut across the woods. Two of the party were ready to follow him. A third objected that we would run the risk of getting lost if we left the path; that night was approaching, and the wolves numerous.

"Come along, canaille!" I cried, pushing the guide forward, and speaking with the tone and manner of a prince; "follow the path, and have done with your nonsense."

"Not me," said the child, "I just now saw the sorcerer saying words at his door, and I don't want to have the fever all the year."

"Bah!" said another, "I'm not afraid. He's not wicked to everybody. He does no harm to children, and besides, if we pass by very quietly, and don't say anything, he won't see us. What do you suppose he'll do to us?"

"Oh! it would be all right," replied the first; "I don't suppose he'd notice us, or do us any harm. If

we were alone! — But Monsieur Bernard is with us, and he'll be sure to cast a spell upon us."

"What is that you are saying, fool?" I cried, raising my fist.

"It is not my fault, monseigneur," replied the child; "that mean old fellow does not like les monsieurs, and he says he wishes he could see Monsieur Tristan, and all his children, hanging on the same tree."

"He said that, did he?" I replied; "good! Come on, and you will see! If you love me, follow me; he who quits me is a coward."

Two of my companions were gained by this appeal, which flattered their vanity. All the others pretended to imitate them; but, after a few steps, they ran into the underwood, and took flight, while I, escorted by my two satellites, proceeded proudly on my way. The little Sylvain, who was in advance, took off his hat as far off as he could see Patience, and when we came opposite to him, although his head was bowed, and he did not seem to notice us, the child, seized with terror, said, in a trembling voice, —

"Good-evening and good-night, Master Patience."

The sorcerer, aroused from his reverie, trembled like a man awakened suddenly from sleep; and I saw, not without a certain emotion, his swarthy face, half covered with a thick gray beard. His large head was completely bald, and the bareness of his forehead contrasted strangely with the heaviness of his eyebrows, under which his eyes, round and deeply set, shone with penetrating splendor, like heat lightning flashing behind autumnal foliage. He was a small man, but had large shoulders, and was built like a gladiator. He was clad in rags ostentatiously poor and vile. His face was short and common, like that of Socrates; and if the fire of genius burned in his strongly-marked features, it was impossible for me to recognize it. He looked to me like a ferocious beast — an unclean animal. A feeling of loathing took possession of me; and, resolved to avenge the insult which he had offered my family, I put a stone into my sling, and, without further preliminaries, hurled it vigorously.

At this very moment, Patience was in the act of replying to the child's salutation:

"Good-evening, children! God be with you!" he said; and as he spoke the stone whistled by his ear, and struck a tame owl, which was the sorcerer's pet, and which, perched amid the ivy that crowned the door, was just waking at the coming on of night.

The owl uttered a piercing cry, and fell bleeding at the feet of his master, who replied by a groan, and remained motionless with surprise and fury for several seconds; then, suddenly taking the palpitating victim by the legs, he lifted it from the earth, and came to meet us.

"Which of you, wretched children," he cried, in a voice of thunder, "threw that stone?"

One of my companions who was behind me, fled with the rapidity of the wind; but Sylvain, seized by the large hand of the sorcerer, fell upon his knees, and swore by the Holy Virgin, and by Saint Solange, the patron saint of Berry, that he was innocent of the murder of the bird. I felt, I must confess, a strong inclination to rush into the thicket, and let him get out of the scrape as he best could. I had expected to see a decrepit old juggler, and not to fall into the hands of a robust enemy; but pride held me back.

"If it was you," Patience said to my trembling companion, "woe to you, for you are a wicked child, and you will be a dishonest man. You have committed a base act; you have taken pleasure in bringing sorrow upon an old man who never injured you, and you have done this perfidiously, treacherously, while dissimulating, and bidding me good-evening with politeness. You are a liar, a traitor; you have robbed me of my only companion, my only wealth; you have taken delight in doing evil. May God preserve you from living, if you are going to continue thus."

"Oh, Monsieur Patience," cried the child, clasping his hands, "do not curse me, do not bewitch me, do not give me the fever; I did not do it; may God exterminate me if I did."

"It was your companion, then," said Patience, seizing

me by the collar of my coat, and shaking me like a young tree that he was going to uproot.

"Yes, it was I," I replied, haughtily; "and if you want to know my name, learn that I am called Bernard Mauprat, and learn, too, that a peasant who touches a gentleman deserves to be put to death."

"Death! you would put me to death, Mauprat!' cried the old man, petrified with surprise and indignation. "And where would God be if a brat like you had a right to threaten a man of my age? Death! Ah! you are indeed a Mauprat — cursed dog — and are true to your race. A Mauprat talks of putting to death as soon as he is born! Death, my wolf's cub! Do you know it is you, and not I, who deserve to die, not for what you have just done, but for being the son of your father, and the nephew of your uncles? Ah! I am glad to hold a Mauprat in the hollow of my hand, and learn whether a rogue of a gentleman weighs as much as a Christian."

And, as he spoke, he lifted me from the ground as if I had been a hare.

"Little one," he continued, "go to your home, and fear nothing. Patience does not get angry with his equals; he pardons his brothers because they are ignorant, like himself, and know not what they do. But a Mauprat, you see, knows how to read and write, and for all his knowledge he is only the more wicked. Go! — but no, remain; remain, that you may see once in your life a gentleman whipped by a peasant. You are going to see that now, little one, and I beg you not to forget it, and to tell your parents about it."

Pale with rage, I gnashed my teeth, and made a desperate resistance, but in vain. Patience, with a frightful coolness, tied me to a tree with a bit of withe. He had only to touch me with his large and horny hand to bend me like a reed; and yet I was remarkably strong for my age. He hung the owl to a branch over my head, and the blood of the bird dropping upon me filled me with horror. This, indeed, was nothing more than the customary punishment given to dogs who ate game; but, bewildered by rage, despair, and the cries of my com-

panion, I regarded it as some devilish spell. And yet, I think that I should have suffered less, even if he had metamorphosed me into an owl, than I did in submitting to the chastisement that he gave me. In vain did I overwhelm him with threats, in vain did I utter frightful oaths of vengeance, in vain did the little peasant throw himself once more upon his knees, repeating in an agony, —

"Monsieur Patience, for the love of God, for the love of your own life, do not harm him; the Mauprats will kill you."

Shrugging his shoulders, he began to laugh. Then, arming himself with a handful of holly, he gave me a flogging, which, I must confess, was more humiliating than cruel; for, as soon as my blood began to flow, he stopped beating me, and threw his twigs away, and I even noticed a sudden change in his features and voice, which softened sensibly, as if he had repented his severity.

"Mauprat," he said, crossing his arms upon his breast, and turning his piercing eyes upon me, "you have been chastised; you have been insulted, my young gentleman, and I am satisfied! I could prevent you from ever injuring me, if I chose, by stopping your breath with a tap of my finger, and burying you under the stone before my door. Who would think of seeking the beautiful child of the noble in the hermitage of *Bonhomme* Patience? But, for my part, I do not love vengeance. That you can see plainly, for, at your first cry of pain, my blows ceased. I do not love to inflict suffering, for I am not a Mauprat. It was good for you to learn, for once, from your own experience, what it is to be the victim. May this knowledge disgust you with the trade of executioner, which is an inheritance in your family! Good-evening: go — I am no longer angry; the justice of the good God is satisfied. You can tell your uncles to put me on their gridiron, if you will; they will eat a tough morsel, and they will swallow flesh that will come to life again in their throats, to strangle them."

He took up the dead owl, and contemplated it with a gloomy air:

"The child of a peasant would not have done that,"

he said. "To destroy life is the pastime of a gentleman."

Then, as he withdrew into his abode, he uttered an exclamation which only escaped him on rare occasions and which had given him the surname which he bore.

"*Patience, Patience!*" he cried.

These words, according to the good women of the province, were a cabalistic formula in his mouth; and whenever he had been heard to pronounce them, some misfortune always happened, they said, to the person who had offended him. Sylvain made a sign of the cross, to exorcise the evil spirit. The terrible words resounded from the vault of the tower into which the sorcerer had just entered, and then the door closed behind him with a loud crash.

My companion was so eager to escape, that he came very near leaving me without taking time to untie me. As soon as I was free, he cried, —

"Cross yourself, for the love of the good God, cross yourself! If you do not, we will be bewitched; we shall be eaten by wolves as we go through the woods, or we shall meet the great beast."

"Fool!" I cried; "hold your tongue with your nonsense! Listen! if you are ever so unlucky as to tell any human being what has happened, I will strangle you."

"Alas! monsieur, what then shall I do?" he replied, with a mixture of naiveté and malice; "the sorcerer commanded me to tell my parents."

I raised my arm to strike him, but my strength gave way. Suffocated with rage at the treatment I had just received, I fell almost fainting, and Sylvain took advantage of my weakness to fly.

When I recovered my senses, I found myself alone; I did not know this part of Varenne, I had never been here before, and it was horribly wild. All day long, I had seen traces of wolves and wild boars on the sand It was already night, and I had still two leagues to go before reaching la Roche Mauprat. The door would be closed, the drawbridge raised; and if I did not arrive before nine o'clock, I would be received with bullets. It

was a hundred to one, ignorant of the roads as I was, that it would be impossible for me to go two leagues in an hour. Notwithstanding, I would rather have died a thousand deaths than have begged shelter from the inhabitant of Gazeau Tower, even if he would have granted it graciously. My pride was bleeding more than my flesh.

I rushed forward, at whatever risk. The path made a thousand turns, a thousand other paths crossed it. I reached the plain, and came to a pasture enclosed by hedges; there all trace of the path disappeared. I leaped the hedge at the risk of breaking my neck, and fell into a field. The night was dark; and, even if it had been day, I should have had no means of finding my way across the fields, shut in on all sides by banks and thorn hedges. Finally, I came to a heath, then to a wood, and my fears, which had been a little calmed, were renewed; for I confess I was a prey to mortal terror. Trained to courage, as a dog is to hunting, I kept up a good countenance while the eyes of others were upon me. Stimulated by vanity, I was audacious when I had spectators, but, left to myself in the dark night, exhausted by fatigue and hunger, although I felt no desire to eat, sure of being beaten by my uncles when I returned home, and yet desiring to return as eagerly as if a terrestrial paradise had awaited me at la Roche Mauprat, I wandered until day, suffering agonies which it is impossible for me to describe. The howling of the wolves, happily at a distance, resounded more than once through the woods, freezing the blood in my veins; while my excited imagination added to the dangers that threatened me,—as if my position had not been sufficiently precarious in reality,—a thousand fantastic images. Patience was regarded as a *wolf-leader*. You know this is a cabalistic specialty believed in in all countries. Each instant, therefore, I fancied that the diabolical little old man would rush forward, disguised as a half wolf, and escorted by his famished band, and that they would pursue me through the underwood. Several times hares leaped between my legs, and, at the shock, I narrowly

escaped falling over backwards. Here, as I was sure of not being seen, I crossed myself again and again; for, while affecting incredulity, I cherished, at the bottom of my soul, all the superstitions that are born of fear.

Finally, towards daybreak, I reached la Roche Mauprat; I waited in a ditch until the gates were opened, and then slipped into my room, without being seen by any one. I was not watched over very tenderly, as you know, and my absence during the night had not been noticed. When I left my room again I met my uncle Jean on the staircase, but I made him believe that I had just risen; and, this stratagem having succeeded, I went to sleep all day long in the hay-loft.

V.

HAVING nothing more to fear for myself, it would have been easy for me to revenge myself on my enemy; everything urged me to do so. What he had said of my family would have been enough for my purpose, without referring to the outrage done to my person, which I was reluctant to acknowledge. I had only to say the word, and eight Mauprats would have been on horseback in quarter of an hour, delighted to have an example to make, especially as they would have been called upon to punish a man who paid them no rent, and who consequently would have seemed to them good for nothing but to be hung, in order to terrify their more submissive vassals.

And yet, I know not how it was, but the idea of obtaining my revenge by setting eight men upon one was horrible to me, and would have been so even if there had been no danger of his suffering violence at their hands. At the moment of making my request (for in my anger I had resolved to make it), I was restrained by an instinctive principle of loyalty, which I did not understand, and could scarcely have explained to myself. Possibly the words of Patience had inspired me, without

my knowing it, with a sentiment of salutary shame. Possibly his just maledictions against the nobility had aroused me to some faint perception of the idea of justice. Possibly, in a word, the emotions I had sometimes felt, and which I had hitherto regarded as impulses of weakness and cowardice, began secretly, from this time, to appear to me more serious and less despicable.

Be this as it may, I contented myself with thrashing Silvain, to punish him for having abandoned me, and decide him not to betray my misadventure, and remained silent. My bitter recollection of the affair was finally softened by an incident that occurred towards the close of the autumn, when I happened to be hunting with Sylvain. This poor Sylvain must have had a real affection for me; for, in spite of my brutal treatment, he was always at my heels the moment I had left the chateau. He defended me, moreover, from the slanders of his companions, maintaining that I was only a little spirited, and was not wicked. Gentle and resigned, he belonged to a class who, by the submissive goodness of their natures, foster the pride and cruelty of the great. We were hunting larks with a net, when my page in wooden shoes, who always searched in the advance-guard, returned to my side, saying in his rude dialect, —

"I see the wolf-leader and the mole-catcher."

This warning sent a shudder through all my limbs. Soon, however, resentment aroused my courage, and I marched straight forward to meet the sorcerer, a little reassured, perhaps, by the presence of his companion, who was an habitual visitor of la Roche Mauprat, and who I supposed would be bound to treat me with respect, and, if necessary, afford me assistance.

The business of Marcasse, called the mole-catcher, was to purge the houses and fields of the country of pole-cats, weasels, rats, and other noxious animals. He did not confine his good offices to Berry; but every year made the tour of La Marche, Nivernais, Limousin, and Saintonge, travelling alone and on foot through every part of the country where they had the good sense to appreciate his talents. He was well received everywhere.

in the chateau as well as in the hut; for his trade, which is still in the hands of his descendants, had been practised with honesty and success by his ancestors for many generations. He had a lodging, and work secured for every day in the year. As regular in his circuit as the earth in her rotation, he reappeared, at a fixed time, in all the places through which he had passed the preceding year, and was always accompanied by the same dog and the same long sword.

This personage was as curious, and more comical in his way, than the sorcerer Patience. He was a bilious and melancholy man, — tall, thin, and angular; and was remarkable for the deliberation, the majesty, and the circumspection of his manners. He was so averse to talking, that he replied to all questions by monosyllables; and yet he never neglected the rules of the most austere politeness, and said few words without lifting his hand to the crown of his hat as a sign of reverence and civility. Was this his natural character? or, indeed, as he pursued his wandering trade, had the fear of alienating some of his numerous customers by inconsiderate remarks inspired him with his wise reserve? No one could tell! He had free access to every house in the province; in the daytime the keys of all the granaries were at his disposition; in the evening a place was reserved for him at the fireside of every kitchen. His dreamy and abstracted manner induced people to talk without reserve in his presence, so that he knew everything that occurred; and yet he had never been known to report in one house what took place in another.

If you wish to know how it was that I had been struck by his peculiarities, I need only tell you that I had witnessed the efforts of my grandfather and my uncles to make him talk. They hoped to find out from him what was occurring at the chateau de Saint Sévère, the home of M. Hubert de Mauprat, the object of their hatred and envy; and although don Marcasse (he was called don because in pride and bearing he was thought to resemble a ruined hidalgo), — although don Marcasse, I say, proved as impenetrable upon this subject as upon

all others, the Mauprats *Coupe-Jarret* never ceased to coax and wheedle him, in the vain expectation of obtaining some information about Mauprat *Casse-Tête*.

No one could discover the sentiments of Marcasse upon any subject whatever; to suppose that he had none, would have been the shortest way of accounting for his reserve. The friendship that Patience seemed to feel for him, however, — so great that he accompanied him for weeks at a time upon his journeys, — gave rise to the suspicion that sorcery had something to do with his mysterious air; and that it was not alone the length of his sword, and the address of his dog, that wrought such wonderful havoc among the moles and polecats. The peasants whispered of enchanted herbs, by means of which he forced these suspicious animals to come from their holes, so that he might catch them in a snare; but as they reaped the benefit of this magic, they did not dream of imputing it to him as a crime.

I do not know whether you have ever seen this sort of hunting; it is very curious, above all in barns and granaries. The man and dog climb ladders, and run along the timbers of the roof, with the most surprising confidence and agility. The dog scents the holes in the walls, plays the part of a cat, lies in wait and watches in ambush, until the game exposes itself to the rapier of the hunter, while the man thrusts through bundles of straw, and puts the enemy to the edge of the sword. All this, accomplished and directed with gravity and dignity by don Marcasse, was, I can assure you, a most singular and diverting spectacle.

When I saw this vassal, I thought I could brave the sorcerer, and I approached him boldly. Sylvain looked at me with admiration, and I noticed that Patience himself had not expected so much audacity. I pretended to go up to Marcasse and talk to him, so as to defy my enemy. Seeing this, he pushed the mole-catcher gently aside, and laying his heavy hand upon my head, said tranquilly, —

"You have grown in the last few months, my fine young gentleman!"

The color rushed to my face, and I drew back disdainfully.

"Take care what you do, peasant!" I cried; "if you still have your two ears, remember well it is to me that you owe them."

"My two ears!" Patience exclaimed, with a bitter laugh. And then, alluding to the surname of my family, he added, "Do you mean my two throats? *Patience! Patience!*" he continued; "the time is not far off, perhaps, when the peasants will neither cut the throats nor cut off the ears of the nobles, but the head and the purse —"

"Silence, master Patience!" said the mole-catcher, in a solemn voice; "you are not talking like a philosopher."

"You are right," replied the sorcerer; "and, in fact, I don't know why I quarrel with this lad. He ought naturally to have had his uncles make a broth of me; for I flogged him, last summer, for playing me a foolish trick. I don't know what happened in the family, but the Mauprats lost a fine opportunity of injuring a neighbor."

"Learn, peasant," I said, "that a nobleman avenges himself nobly; I did not wish to have my wrongs punished by people who are stronger than you; but wait for two years, and I promise to hang you myself, with my own hands, on a certain tree that I very well remember, which stands before the door of Gazeau Tower. If I do not do this, may I cease to be a gentleman! if I spare you, may I be called wolf-leader!"

Patience smiled; and then, suddenly becoming serious, he fixed upon me that profound look which rendered his countenance so remarkable. Then he turned to the hunter of polecats.

"It is singular," he said, "but there is something in race, after all. Take any nobleman, and, no matter how wicked he may be, he will have more heart, in certain things, than the bravest among us. Ah, it is quite simple," he added, speaking to himself; "they are brought up like that, and we — we are born, they tell us, to obey — *Patience!*"

He was silent for a moment, and then arousing himself from his reverie, he said to me, in a tone of good-humored raillery, —

"And so you want to hang me, Monseigneur Stubble Blade? Eat a great deal of soup, then, for you are not yet tall enough to reach the branch that will hold me; and before then — a good deal of water will flow under the bridge, perhaps, whose taste you don't yet know."

"Badly spoken! badly spoken!" interrupted the mole-catcher, with a severe air. "Go, peace! — Monsieur Bernard, pardon Patience, he is an old man, — a fool."

"No, no," said Patience. "I want him to hang me. He is right; he owes me that; and, in fact, it may come about sooner than all the rest. Do not make too much haste to grow, monsieur; for, as for me, I am getting old sooner than I could wish; and, since you are so brave, you would not wish to attack a man who could no longer defend himself."

"You made good use of your strength with me!" I cried. "Did you not beat me? Was not that cowardly, — say?"

He made a gesture of surprise.

"Oh! children, children!" he said, "see how he reasons! Truth is in the mouth of children."

He withdrew, dreaming and muttering to himself, according to his custom. Marcasse took off his hat, and said to me in an impassible tone, —

"He is wrong; there should be peace — pardon — repose. Farewell!"

They disappeared; and with this interview my relations with Patience ceased for the time being. They were not renewed until long afterwards.

VI.

I WAS fifteen years old when my grandfather died. His death caused me no sorrow, but it filled the other inhabitants of la Roche Mauprat with genuine consterna-

tion. He was the soul of all the vices that reigned there; and, although more cruel than his sons, it is certain that he was less vile and debased than they. The sort of glory which his audacity had acquired for us, was obscured after his death. His children, hitherto well disciplined, became more and more drunken and debauched; besides, each day rendered our expeditions more perilous.

Excepting for a small number of vassals whom we treated well, and who were devoted to us, we were completely isolated, and without resources. The neighboring country had been abandoned in consequence of our depredations. The terror that we inspired widened, each day, the desert around us. In our marauding expeditions we had to go to great distances, venturing even to the borders of the plain; there we were not always successful, and Laurent, the boldest of us all, was grievously wounded in a skirmish. It became necessary to seek other resources; Jean suggested them. He proposed that we should go to the fairs under various disguises, and commit skilful thefts. From brigands we became pickpockets, and our detested name was more and more degraded. We established relations with all the vicious knaves lurking in the province, and, by an exchange of fraudulent services, once more escaped misery.

I say we, for at the time of my grandfather's death I had begun to make one with this band of cutthroats. Yielding to my entreaties, he had allowed me to take part in some of the latest expeditions that he attempted. I shall offer no excuses for the fact, but you see before you a man who has followed the trade of a bandit. The recollection causes me no more remorse than a soldier would feel for having joined in a campaign at the command of a general. I thought that we were still living in the middle ages. The force and wisdom of established laws were for me words without meaning. I felt strong and brave, and I fought. It is true that the results of our victories often made me blush, but I washed my hands of the deeds of cruelty in which I took no part, and I remember with pleasure having aided

more than one victim, whom my uncles had overthrown, to rise and make his escape.

This new existence bewildered me by its activity, its dangers and fatigues; it tore me from the painful reflections that might otherwise have arisen in my mind. Above all, it removed me from the immediate tyranny of Jean. But, after my grandfather's death, when our band had been degraded by exploits of a different character, I fell once more under his odious authority. Utterly unfit for lying and fraud, I showed not only an aversion, but an actual incapacity for this new branch of industry. My uncles, therefore, finding that I had ceased to be useful, began once more to persecute me. They would have driven me away, had they not feared that I might reconcile myself to society, and become a dangerous enemy. Forced to accept the alternative of supporting, or being compelled to fear me, they thought seriously of forcing me into a fight, and killing me; I learned afterwards that they held frequent consultations upon this subject. Jean was in favor of this plan, but Antoine, who had not lost, so completely as his brothers, the energy of Tristan, and the sort of domestic equity that he had practised, opposed him, and proved that I was more useful than troublesome. I was a good soldier, he said, and occasions might yet arise when they would want the strength of my arm. Moreover, I might be trained for a swindler; I was very young, and very ignorant, but if my uncle Jean would win me by kindness, if he would render my fate less unhappy, above all, if he would enlighten me as to my true position, by making me comprehend that I was lost to society, and could not appear in it without being immediately hung, it was very probable that my pride and obstinacy would give way; yielding on the one hand to satisfaction, and on the other to necessity. At all events, this course ought to be tried before they made up their minds to despatch me.

"For," said Antoine, as he concluded his homily, "we were ten Mauprats last year; our father is dead, and, if we kill Bernard, there will only be eight of us."

This argument prevailed. They drew me from the sort of prison in which I had languished for several months; they gave me new clothes; they changed my old gun for a beautiful rifle that I had always desired; they made me comprehend my situation in the world; they poured me out the best wine at my meals; I promised to reflect, and, in the meanwhile, became rather more brutalized in inaction and drunkenness, than I had been while pursuing the trade of a brigand.

Nevertheless, my captivity had left such a terrible impression upon my mind, that I took an oath in secret to dare any fate that might await me on the territories of the King of France, rather than again endure such barbarous treatment. One unlucky point of honor alone retained me at la Roche Mauprat; it was evident that a storm was gathering over our heads. The peasants were discontented, in spite of our efforts to attach them to us; ideas of independence were slowly penetrating among them, our most faithful servants were weary of supplying us abundantly with bread and provisions without receiving a due equivalent; they demanded money, and money we did not possess. We had received several peremptory summons to pay our taxes; and as our creditors had joined the officers of the law and the rebellious peasants, everything threatened us with a catastrophe like that to which the Seigneur de Pleumartin, who lived in the neighborhood, had just fallen a victim.*

My uncles had long entertained the project of forming an offensive and defensive alliance with this country squire; but, at the very moment when Pleumartin,

* The Seigneur de Pleumartin, who lived in this province, has left a record which preserves the narrative of Mauprat from the charge of exaggeration. The pen refuses to trace the ferocious and obscene iniquities, and the refinements of torture that signalized the life of this madman, and which perpetuated the traditions of feudal brigandage in Berry, up to the very last days of the ancient monarchy. The peasants besieged his chateau, and after an obstinate resistance, he was taken and hung. There are persons still living, and not yet in extreme old age, who knew him.

about to fall into the hands of his enemies, had given us his word that he would receive us as friends and allies if we would march to his assistance, we learned of his defeat and tragic death. Since that time, we had held ourselves constantly on guard. It was evident that we must quit the country, or pass through some decisive crisis. Some advised the first course, but most of the brothers persisted in following the advice of their dying father, which was to bury themselves, when driven to extremity, under the walls of their donjon. They called it base and cowardly to suggest the idea of flight or compromise. The fear of incurring such a reproach, and perhaps also my instinctive love of danger, still kept me at la Roche Mauprat; but my aversion for this odious existence was slumbering within me, and was always ready to break violently forth.

One evening, after a heavy supper, we remained at the table, drinking and conversing, God knows in what terms, or upon what subjects! The weather was frightful. The rain, pouring in through the broken windows, streamed over the pavement of the hall, the storm shook the old walls of the tower. The night wind, whistling through the crevices in the roof, made the flames of our resin torches flicker and undulate. My uncles had rallied me a great deal, during the meal, on what they called my virtue; they pretended to regard my shyness towards women as continence, and they were trying to incite me to evil by ridiculing my awkward bashfulness. I defended myself from their gross jests, and replied to them in the same tone, as I best could; and as I had drank enormously, in the meanwhile, my ferocious imagination was inflamed, and I boasted that I would be bolder and more successful with the first woman who was brought to la Roche Mauprat, than any of my uncles. The challenge was accepted with roars of laughter. The rolling of the thunder responded to this infernal gayety.

Suddenly the horn sounded at the portcullis. All relapsed into silence. The flourish was one which the Mauprats used to call and recognize each other. It was my uncle Laurent, who had been absent all day, and who

was demanding admission. We had so many causes of distrust in our fortress, that we were our own turnkeys and doorkeepers. Jean arose, shaking the keys, but immediately remained motionless to listen to the horn, which announced by a second flourish that Laurent had brought a prize, and that we must go in state to meet him. In the twinkling of an eye all the Mauprats, excepting myself, snatched up torches, and hurried to the portcullis; profoundly indifferent, and not very well able to walk, I did not follow them.

"If it is a woman," cried Antoine, as he went out, "I swear by the soul of my father that she shall be awarded to you, courageous youth! and we will see whether you are as audacious as you pretend."

Plunged in a dull, uneasy reverie, I remained motionless, with my elbows resting upon the table.

When the door reopened, I saw a woman, dressed in a strange costume, who entered the room with a confident step. This unexpected vision bewildered me so completely, that I had to make an effort to comprehend what one of the Mauprats came and whispered in my ear. The horse of this young lady had taken fright at a wolf-hunt, which a number of the noblemen of the neighborhood, with their wives, had attended, and, running away, had carried her far from the hunt. After galloping nearly a league it had become quiet, and she had tried to return to her friends; but not knowing the country of Varenne, where all the landmarks resemble each other, she had gone more and more astray. The storm, and the approach of night, had put the climax to her troubles. Finally she met Laurent, who offered to conduct her to the chateau of Rochemaure, which was six leagues off, but which he informed her was near by, and of which he pretended to be the gamekeeper. The lady of Rochemaure was not known to her personally, but they were distant relatives; and the stranger flattered herself that she would be well received. She had never seen any of the Mauprats, and had no idea that their den was in this vicinity. She followed her guide, therefore, without distrust; and as she had never seen la Roche Mauprat, even from a dis-

tance, she entered the hall of our orgies without having the least suspicion of the snare into which she had fallen.

When I rubbed my heavy eyes, and looked at this woman, so young and so beautiful, — when I marked her calm, frank, and honest expression, the like of which I had never seen upon the brow of any woman in this place (only insolent prostitutes or stupid victims had crossed the portcullis of our chateau),—I imagined that I was dreaming.

I knew the part that fairies played in my legends of chivalry. Recalling their power and beauty, I almost imagined that Morgana or Urganda had entered our house to execute justice; and for an instant I longed to throw myself upon my knees, and protest against the decree which would have confounded me with my uncles. Antoine, to whom Laurent had rapidly whispered a few words, approached the lady with as much politeness as he was capable of assuming, and begged her to excuse the hunting costume worn by himself and his friends. They were all nephews or cousins, he said, of Madame de Rochemaure; and, before sitting down to table, they were waiting until this lady, who was very devout, should leave her chapel, where she was having a pious conference with her chaplain. The air of candor and confidence with which the unknown listened to this absurd lie, stabbed me to the heart, although I could not have explained what I felt.

"I do not wish to disturb Madame de Rochemaure," she said to my uncle Jean, who was dancing attendance upon her with the air of a satyr; "I am too much troubled at the anxiety that I myself am causing my father and friends at this very moment, to be willing to accept her hospitality. Say this to her, and beg her to provide me with a fresh horse and a guide, so that I may return to the place where I presume my friends will have gone to await me."

"Madame," replied Jean, with assurance, "it is impossible for you to set out in such weather; besides, you would only delay meeting those whom you seek by doing so. Ten of our people, well mounted and carrying torches,

shall depart immediately by ten different routes, and search Varenne in all directions. Your relatives, therefore, cannot fail to receive intelligence of you within two hours, at the most; and undoubtedly they will soon join you here, where we will entertain them to the best of our ability. Remain quiet, therefore, and accept some cordial to restore your strength; for you are wet, and worn out with fatigue."

"Were it not for my anxiety, I should be famished," she said, smiling; "I will try and eat something, but don't put yourselves to any inconvenience upon my account. You have already shown me a thousand times too much goodness."

She approached the table upon which my elbows were planted, and, without noticing me, took some fruit that was by my side. I turned and stared at her insolently, with a brutish air. She supported my gaze with arrogance; so, at least, it appeared to me then. I learned afterwards that she did not even see me; for while making an effort to appear calm, and reply confidently to the hospitality that had been offered her, she was greatly disturbed at the unexpected presence of so many strange men, roughly dressed, and with bad faces. Nevertheless, she suspected nothing. I heard one of the Mauprats near me say to Jean, —

"Good! All goes well; she falls into the snare. Make her drink, and she will talk."

"Wait a moment," replied Jean, "and watch her carefully. This is a serious affair; we have something better to do than merely to amuse ourselves. I shall hold a council, and you will be called upon for your opinion; but keep your eye upon Bernard."

"What is the matter?" I said, turning rudely towards him. "Does not that girl belong to me? Did not Antoine swear on the soul of my grandfather? —"

"Ah! parbleu, it is true!" said Antoine, approaching our group, while the other Mauprats surrounded the lady. "Listen, Bernard! I will keep my word on one condition."

"What?"

"It is quite simple: for the next ten minutes you are not to let that young lady know that she is not at the house of the old Rochemaure."

"Who do you take me for?" I replied, pulling my hat over my eyes; "do you think I'm a fool? Wait a moment! do you want me to go and put on my grandmother's dress, which is upstairs, and pass myself off for the devout old lady of Rochemaure?"

"A good idea!" said Laurent.

"Before anything else, I have something to say to you," interrupted Jean.

He drew them away, after making a sign to the others, who all followed him. As they were going out, I imagined that I saw Jean directing Antoine to watch me; but Antoine, with an obstinacy which I did not comprehend, persisted in following with the rest. I was left alone with the unknown.

At first I was stunned and bewildered, and felt more embarrassed than pleased at the tête-a-tête. The wine I had been drinking had gone to my head: I tried, however, to explain the mysterious events that had just occurred, and conceived an idea which, although it proved completely erroneous, was really not improbable.

I imagined that I could account for all that I had seen and heard, by supposing, in the first place, that this lady, so tranquil and so gayly dressed, was one of the gypsy girls whom I had sometimes met at the fairs held in the neighborhood; in the second place, that Laurent had met her in the fields, and had brought her home to entertain the company; and, in the third place, that they had confided to him my state of vain-glorious intoxication, and had led him away to put my gallantry to the proof, while they watched me through the keyhole. My first movement, as soon as this idea occurred to me, was to rise and go straight to the door, which I double-locked and bolted; then I returned to the lady, fully resolved not to give her an opportunity to ridicule my timidity.

She was seated in the chimney-corner, under the mantle-piece; and as she was leaning over the hearth, busily occupied in drying her wet clothes, she had not noticed

what I was doing; but when I approached her the strange expression of my face made her tremble. I had determined to embrace her, to begin with; but, through what miracle I know not, as soon as she raised her eyes to mine, I found it impossible to venture upon this familiarity. I could only find courage to say, —

"My faith, mademoiselle, you are charming, and you please me, as truly as my name is Bernard Mauprat!"

"Bernard Mauprat!" she cried, rising. "You are Bernard Mauprat! you? In that case change your language, and learn to whom you are speaking. Have they not told you?"

"They have not told me, but I can guess," I replied, with a sneer, forcing myself to struggle against the respect with which her sudden paleness and imperious attitude inspired me.

"If you guess," she said, "how is it possible for you to speak to me as you are doing? I have always been told, indeed, that you had been badly brought up, and yet I have always desired to meet you."

"In truth," I said, still sneering, "you, princess of the high roads, who have known so many people in the course of your wanderings? Give me a kiss, my beauty, and you will soon find out whether I have been as well brought up as my uncles, whom you were listening to so politely just now."

"Your uncles!" she cried, seizing her chair abruptly, and placing it between us, as if through an instinct of self-defence. "Oh, my God! my God! I am not at the house of Madame de Rochemaure!"

"The name begins the same, anyhow; and our rock is as good as any that exists."

"La Roche Mauprat!" she said, shivering from head to foot, like a doe that hears the wolves howl. Her lips became white; her face assumed an expression of agony. I trembled myself with involuntary sympathy, and came very near addressing her in an entirely different tone. But my suspicions were too strong to be overcome.

"Is that anything wonderful for her?" I said to myself; "is she not playing a comedy? and if the Mauprats

are not behind some wainscoting listening to us, will she not tell them, word for word, all that takes place? Yet, she is trembling like a leaf of the poplar-tree! But if she is an actress! I saw an actress who played Genevieve de Brabant, and who wept so that any one would have been deceived."

I was in the greatest perplexity; and I stared wildly, sometimes upon her and sometimes upon the doors. Each moment I imagined that they would be thrown wide open, and that my uncles would rush in, roaring with laughter.

This woman was beautiful as the day. I do not believe there ever existed a woman so lovely as she. It is not I alone who affirm this; she has left a reputation for beauty throughout the country which has not yet been forgotten. She was tall and supple, and was remarkable for the ease and elegance of her movements. Her complexion was fair, while her eyes and hair were black. Her glance was full of sweetness and vivacity; a mingled expression of goodness and intelligence gave her countenance an indescribable charm, for Heaven had endowed her equally with the tenderest sensibilities and a brilliant intellect. She was naturally gay and brave, — an angel whom the sorrows of humanity had not dared approach. This was the first trial of her life; and it was I, brute that I was, who inflicted it. I took her for a gypsy, — she who was an angel of purity.

She was my young cousin, Edmée de Mauprat, daughter of my great-uncle, M. Hubert de Mauprat, — who was called the chevalier, and who, when already advanced in years, had obtained a release from the Order of Malta, in order to marry. Edmée and I were of the same age, there being a difference of only a few months between us. We were both of us seventeen, and this was our first interview. She whom I should have protected, at the peril of my life, from and against all, — she it was who stood before me, palpitating and stricken with consternation, like a victim before the executioner.

She made a great effort, and, approaching me, as I

walked up and down the hall trying to collect my thoughts, told me who she was, and added, —

"It is impossible that you can be a wretch like those brigands whom I have just seen, and whose infernal life I know. You are young; your mother was good and wise. My father wished to bring you up and adopt you. Even now he regrets being unable to draw you from the abyss in which you are plunged. Have you not received several messages from him? Bernard, you are my near relative. Think of the ties of blood; why do you wish to insult me? Do they mean to assassinate or to torture me? Why did they deceive me, telling me that I was at Rochemaure? Why have they withdrawn with an air of mystery? What is preparing? what is passing?"

The words had scarcely died upon her lips, when the report of a gun was heard without. A discharge from the culverin replied to it, and the alarm-trumpet shook with lugubrious voice the melancholy walls of the chateau. Mademoiselle de Mauprat sank upon a chair. I remained motionless, not knowing whether this might not be a new scene in the comedy devised to turn me into ridicule, and resolved not to trouble myself about the alarm until I had certain proof that it was not simulated.

"Come," I said, going up to her, "acknowledge that this is all a joke! You are not Mademoiselle de Mauprat, and you want to find out whether I am a novice, incapable of making love."

"I swear by Christ," she answered, taking my hands in hers, which were cold as death, "I am Edmée, your relative, your prisoner, your friend; for I have always interested myself in you, I have always entreated my father not to abandon you — but listen, Bernard! they are fighting; guns are firing! It is my father, without doubt, who has come to seek me, and they are going to kill him! Ah!" she cried, falling upon her knees, "go and prevent that, Bernard, my child! Tell your uncles to respect my father, the best of men, if you knew. If they hate us, if they wish to shed our blood, ah, well! let them kill me, — let them tear my heart from my breast, — but tell them to respect my father —"

I was called from without by a vehement voice, —

"Where is that coward? where is that child of misfortune?" said my uncle Laurent.

He shook the door, but I had closed it so firmly that it resisted his furious blows.

"That miserable dastard is amusing himself by making love, while our throats are being cut! Bernard, the *maréchaussée* have attacked us. Your uncle Louis has just been killed. Come, for the love of God, come, Bernard!"

"The devil take you all!" I cried, "and may you be killed yourself, if I believe a word you say; I am not such a fool as you think, and the only dastards here are those who lie. For my part, I have sworn to have this woman, and I will only give her up when I choose."

"Go to the devil!" replied Laurent. "You are making believe —"

The volleys of musketry redoubled. Frightful cries were heard. Laurent left the door, and ran in the direction of the tumult. His eagerness was so genuine, that I was convinced. The idea that I should be accused of cowardice transported me with rage. I rushed towards the door.

"Oh Bernard! Oh Monsieur de Mauprat!" cried Edmée, dragging herself after me, "let me go with you. I will throw myself at the feet of your uncles, I will stop the fight, I will yield all that I possess, — my life, if they desire it, — so that my father may be saved."

"Listen!" I said, turning towards her; "I do not know whether you are deceiving me or not. Sometimes I believe you, and then again I think that my uncles are hiding behind the door yonder, waiting to make a fool of me, while our servants are shooting in the court. You are my cousin, or else an adventuress. You must bind yourself by an oath, and I will do the same. If you are a wandering princess, and I quit this chamber conquered by your grimaces, you must swear to be my mistress, and not to suffer any other person to approach you until I have used my rights; or, for my part, I declare that I will beat you as I beat Flora, my spotted

dog, this morning. If you are Edmée, and I consent to throw myself between your father and those who are trying to kill him, what will you promise to do for me in return?"

"If you save my father," she cried, "I swear that I will marry you!"

"Ay ay!" I cried, emboldened by her enthusiasm, the sublimity of which I did not comprehend. "Give me, then, a pledge, so that, in any case, I shall not go out from here, like a fool."

She allowed me to embrace her without opposition: her cheeks were like ice. She followed my steps mechanically, to accompany me, and I was obliged to repulse her. I did so without rudeness; but she fell as if fainting. I began to comprehend the reality of my situation, for no one was in the corridors, and the tumult from without was becoming more and more alarming. I was about to run for my arms, when a feeling of distrust, or perhaps another sentiment, made me return, and double-lock the door of the hall in which I had left Edmée. I put the key into my belt, and hurried to the battlements, armed with a gun, which I loaded as I ran.

We had been attacked by our old enemy, the *maréchaussée;* the assault had nothing to do with Mademoiselle de Mauprat. Our creditors had obtained an order of arrest against us. The officers of the law, beaten and abused, had made a requisition on the king's attorney, at the Court of Bourges, for a final mandate, which the military was doing its best to carry into effect. They had hoped to capture us without difficulty, by means of a nocturnal surprise. But we were in a better state of defence than they had thought; our people were brave and well armed, and then we were fighting for our very existence, — we had the courage of despair, which is an immense advantage. In our band there were twenty-four persons; they had more than fifty soldiers. About twenty peasants, also, had joined them, and threw stones at our walls; but they did more harm to their allies than to us.

The combat raged furiously for half an hour, and then our resistance so terrified the enemy that they fell back

and suspended hostilities; soon they returned to the charge, and were again repulsed with loss. Hostilities were again suspended, and they summoned us to surrender for the third time, promising that our lives should be spared. Antoine Mauprat replied with an obscene jest. They remained undecided, but did not withdraw.

I had fought bravely; I had done what I called my duty. The truce continued. We could no longer judge of the distance of the enemy, and dared not risk shooting into the darkness, for our ammunition was precious. My uncles were nailed to the ramparts by the expectation of a new attack. Louis was grievously wounded. I thought once more of my prisoner. At the beginning of the fight, I had heard Jean Mauprat say that we would have to make terms with the enemy, in case we were defeated, by offering to give her up, on condition of their raising the siege; if they refused, he declared that she should be hung before their eyes. I could no longer doubt the truth of what she had told me. When we seemed victorious, the captive was forgotten. The cunning Jean alone left his dear culverin, which he aimed with so much delight, and glided like a cat into the darkness. An incredible spasm of jealousy seized me. I threw aside my gun, and rushed after him, my knife in my hand, resolved, I believe, that I would stab him if he touched the being whom I regarded as my booty. I saw him approach the door, try to open it, and look attentively through the keyhole, so as to assure himself that his prey had not escaped. The firing was renewed. He turned upon his heels with the surprising agility with which he was endowed, in spite of his deformity, and ran to the ramparts. For my part, concealed by the shadow of the wall, I let him pass, and did not follow. Another passion than the love of carnage had taken possession of me. A lightning flash of jealousy had inflamed my senses. The smoke of the powder, the sight of blood, the noise, danger, and several bumpers of brandy that we had drank to keep up our strength, had strangely heated my brain. I took the key from my belt, and when I reappeared before my prisoner I was no longer the dis-

trustful boor whose pity she had succeeded in arousing; I was the ferocious brigand of la Roche Mauprat, a hundred times more dangerous than before. She rushed towards me impetuously; I opened my arms to seize her; but, instead of being terrified, she threw herself into them, crying, —

"Ah well, my father?"

"Your father," I said, embracing her, "is not here. There is no question either of him or of you at the breach at this moment. We have shot down a dozen gendarmes, and that is all. We are victorious, as usual. Give yourself no further anxiety, therefore, about your father; and, for my part, I will trouble myself no more about the king's officers. Let us live in peace, and feast on love."

While speaking thus, I seized a goblet of wine that had remained upon the table, and carried it to my lips. She snatched it from my hand with an air of authority, that emboldened me the more.

"Do not drink," she said; "think of what you are saying! Is what you have told me true? Will you answer for it on your honor, — on the soul of your mother?"

"It is all true, I swear it on your beautiful red lips," I answered, still trying to embrace her.

But she drew back terrified.

"Oh my God!" she said, "he is drunk! Bernard! Bernard! Remember what you promised me! keep your word! You know now that I am your relative — your sister."

"You are my mistress or my wife," I answered, pursuing her.

"You are a wretch!" she replied, repulsing me with her riding-whip. "What have you done that I should be anything to you? Have you saved my father?"

"I swore to save him, and if he had been here I should have kept my word; it is the same thing, therefore, as if I had saved him. Do you know, if I had made the attempt, and had failed, that there is no torture at la Roche Mauprat cruel and slow enough to punish

me for such an act of treason? I swore loud enough; they might all have heard me. My faith, I should not care if they had! What matters it to me whether I live a few days more or less? All that I care for now is to enjoy your favor, my beauty, and not to be considered a languishing knight, good for nothing but to be laughed at. Come then, love me, love me, or, on my word, I will go to the walls again, and if I am killed, so much the worse for you. You will no longer have a knight, and you will still have seven Mauprats to hold in check. Your hands will not be strong enough for that, I fear, my pretty little linnet."

These words, which I uttered at random, without any other thought than that of distracting her attention, so that I might seize her by the waist, terrified her to the last degree. She fled to the other end of the hall, and tried to force open a window, but she could not even move the rusty iron sashes. I could not help laughing at her attempt. She clasped her hands anxiously, and for a moment remained motionless; then suddenly the expression of her face changed; she seemed to form a resolution, and came to meet me, smiling, and with her hand extended. And so beautiful did she appear, that a cloud passed before my eyes, and for an instant I could no longer see her.

Pardon me a childish fancy. I must tell you how she was dressed: she never resumed the costume that she wore on that strange night, and, notwithstanding, I can recall it minutely. A long time has passed since then. Ah, well! if I should live as much longer as I have already lived, never would I forget the least detail of that dress, so much did it strike me amid the tumult that was going on within me and without, amid the firing of the guns resounding from the battlements, the flashes of lightning furrowing the heavens, and the violent palpitations that sent my blood rushing from my heart to my brain, and from my head to my breast.

Oh! how beautiful she was! It seems to me that I still see her passing, phantom-like, before my eyes. I imagine, I tell you, that I see her in the riding-dress

that she wore on that night. This dress consisted of an extremely ample cloth skirt, and a waistcoat of pearl gray satin buttoned to the throat; a red scarf was tied around her waist, and over all she wore a hunting vest trimmed with lace, short, and open in front. A gray felt hat, with a broad brim, looped up in front, and shaded by half a dozen red plumes covered her head; and her hair, which was not powdered, was drawn back from her face, and fell behind in two long braids, like those of the Bernese women. Edmée's braids were so long that they almost reached the floor.

This apparel, that appeared to me so fantastic, her blooming youth, and the favorable reception that she seemed to give to my pretensions, were enough to intoxicate me with love and joy. I knew nothing more enchanting than a beautiful woman surrendering herself without gross words, or tears of shame. My first impulse was to receive her in my arms; but, as if vanquished by the irresistible need of adoration which characterizes a first love, even among the grossest beings, I fell at her feet, and pressed her knees to my breast; and, notwithstanding, according to my supposition, it was to a brazen-faced wanton to whom this homage was addressed. I was so moved, that I was very near fainting.

She took my head between her two beautiful hands, crying, —

"Ah! I knew well, I knew well that you were not one of those wretches. Oh! you are going to save me. God be praised! Thank God! thank God! And you, dear child, say, on what side — quick, let us fly! Must we jump from the window? Oh! I am not afraid, my dear sir; come, come!"

I felt as if waking from a dream, and I must confess that the sensation was horribly disagreeable.

"What are you saying?" I answered, rising; "are you making a fool of me? Do you not know where you are, and do you think that I am a child?"

"I know that I am at la Roche Mauprat," she answered, becoming pale once more, "and that I shall be outraged and assassinated within two hours, if, before

then, I have not succeeded in inspiring you with some pity. But I have succeeded," she cried, falling in her turn at my feet; "you are not one of those horrible men. You are too young to be a monster like them; you have seemed to pity me; you will help me to escape, will you not, will you not, my dear heart?"

She took my two hands and kissed them ardently, in the hope of moving me. I listened to her, and gazed upon her with a stupidity that was far from reassuring. My soul, at the best, was seldom stirred by impulses of generosity and compassion, and, at this moment, a passion stronger than all the rest silenced within me the sentiments to which she appealed. I devoured her with my eyes, without comprehending what she said. My only thought was to find out whether I had pleased her, or whether she was trying to make use of me to gain her liberty.

"I see well that you are afraid," I said; "you are wrong to be afraid of me. I certainly will do you no harm. You are so pretty that I can think of nothing but of caressing you."

"Yes, but your uncles will kill me," she cried; "you know that they will. Is it possible that you wish me to be killed? Since I please you, save me, and I will love you afterwards."

"Oh, yes, afterwards, afterwards!" I replied, laughing with a silly, distrustful air, — "after you have had me hung by the officers of the king, whom I have just thrashed so soundly. Come, prove to me that you love me at once, and I will save you afterwards; I can make conditions as well as you."

I pursued her round the room; she fled. Still she showed no anger, and repulsed me with gentle words. The unhappy creature regarded me as her only hope, and feared to irritate me. Ah! could I have comprehended what such a woman was, and what my situation was! But I was incapable of reasoning, and had only one fixed idea, — that which a wolf might have had on a similar occasion.

Finally, as I answered all her prayers with the same

words, — "Love me, or you are mocking me!" she saw what a brute she had to deal with. She made up her mind, and coming up to me, threw her arms about my neck, and concealing her face in my bosom, let me kiss her hair. Then she repulsed me gently, saying, —

"Ah, mon Dieu! do you not see that I love you, and that you have pleased me from the first moment that I saw you? But do you not understand that I hate your uncles, and wish to be yours alone?"

"Yes," I replied, obstinately, "I understand very well. You are saying to yourself, 'Here is an idiot, whom I can persuade to do all that I choose by telling him that I love him, and I will take him away and have him hung.' No, no! if you love me, there is only one word that will serve."

She looked at me with an expression of agony, while I, when she did not turn her head away, tried to kiss her lips. I held her hands in mine; she could no longer do more than delay the moment of her defeat. Suddenly the color returned to her pale face; she smiled, and said, glancing at me with an expression of angelic coquetry, —

"And you — do you love me?"

From this moment the victory was hers. I had no longer the power to carry out my purpose; my wolf nature was transformed, the soul of a man awoke within me, and I believe that I spoke with the accent of a human voice, as I cried, for the first time in my life, —

"Yes, I love you! Yes, I love you!"

"Ah, well," she said, with a childlike air, and with a caressing tone, "let us love each other, and let us escape."

"Yes, let us escape," I replied; "I detest this life, and I abhor my uncles. For a long time I have wished to escape. But it is all in vain; you know well that I cannot fly, — I should be hung."

"You shall not be hung," she said, smiling, "for my future husband is lieutenant-general, and he will save you."

"Your future husband!" I cried, with a pang of jealousy more terrible than I had felt before; "are you going to be married?"

"And why not?" she said, looking at me attentively. I grew pale with rage.

"In that case," I said, trying to seize her in my arms.

"In that case," she answered, giving me a little tap on the cheek, "I see that you are jealous; but it is strange that you should be jealous, — you who wish to possess your mistress at ten o'clock, only to yield her at midnight to eight drunken men, who will restore her to you to-morrow as vile as the mud in the roads."

"Ah! you are right!" I cried. "Go, then, go! I would defend you with the last drop of my blood; but I should be overcome by numbers, and would perish, leaving you in their power. What a horrible thought! You have suggested it, and see how sad I am! Go, — depart!"

"Oh yes! oh yes! my angel," she cried, kissing me on the cheeks with effusion.

This caress, the first that a woman had ever given me since my childhood, recalled, I know not how or why, the last kiss of my mother; and, instead of pleasure, it caused me a profound sadness. My eyes filled with tears. My supplicant perceived it, and kissed my tears, repeating always, —

"Save me! save me!"

"And your marriage?" I said. "Oh, listen! swear to me that you will not marry before I die. You will not have long to wait, for my uncles render good justice and swift justice, as they say."

"Do you not intend to follow me?" she replied.

"Follow you! No! Whether I am hung yonder for having been a bandit, or here for letting you escape, my fate will always be the same; and if I remain here I shall at least escape the shame of passing for an informer, and of being hung in a public place."

"I will not leave you," she cried, "although I perish with you. Come with me! you will risk nothing; believe in my word. I answer for you before God. Kill me, if I deceive you; but let us go quickly.— O God! I hear them singing! They are coming! Ah, if you do not wish to defend me, kill me at once!"

She threw herself into my arms. Love and jealousy had taken complete possession of my heart. I really had an idea of killing her, and I kept my hand upon my hunting-knife the whole time that the Mauprats were shouting and singing in the neighborhood of the hall. They were uttering cries of victory. I cursed Heaven for not having made our enemies victorious. I held Edmée to my breast, and we remained motionless in one another's arms, until another discharge of the guns announced that the combat had been renewed. Then I pressed her passionately to my heart.

"You remind me," I said, "of a poor little dove that flew into my vest one day, when it was pursued by a vulture, and hid itself in my bosom."

"And you did not give it up to the vulture, did you?" replied Edmée.

"No, by all the devils! No more than I will give you up, — you, the prettiest bird of the woods, to these wicked birds of the night who threaten you."

"But how shall we escape?" she cried, listening with terror to the volleys of musketry.

"Easily!" I said; "follow me."

I took a torch, and lifting a trap-door, made her descend with me into the cellar. From thence we gained a subterranean passage hollowed in the rock, which had been used, in former ages, as one of the principal means of defending the chateau; the outlet was opposite the portcullis, and part of the garrison, issuing thence, fell upon the rear of the besiegers, who thus found themselves caught between two fires. But for a long time the garrisons of la Roche Mauprat had not been large enough to be divided into two parties, and besides, during the night, it would have been folly to venture beyond the outer walls. We reached the outlet of the subterranean passage, therefore, without interruption; but, at the last moment, I suddenly relapsed into my former violence. Throwing my torch to the ground, I leaned against the door.

"You shall not go out from here," I said to the trembling Edmée, "until you are mine."

We were in darkness; the tumult of the combat no longer reached us. There was no danger of our being surprised here, for we should have had abundant time to escape. Everything emboldened me. Edmée's fate now depended solely upon my caprice. When she saw that she could no longer inspire me with enthusiasm by the charm of her beauty, she ceased to implore, and stepped back into the darkness.

"Open the door," she said, "and go out first, or I will kill myself! You laid your hunting-knife on the edge of the trap, and forgot it as we descended; I have it, and to return to your uncles you must pass over my dead body."

The energy with which she spoke terrified me.

"Give me back my knife!" I said, "or I will take it from you by force, at all hazards."

"Do you think I am afraid to die?" she answered, calmly. "If I had had this knife in the room above, I should not have humiliated myself before you."

"Ah, well! woe to you!" I cried. "You have deceived me, — you do not love me. Depart! I despise you, and I will not follow you." At the same time I opened the door.

"I will not go without you," she said; "and you will not suffer me to depart without being dishonored. Which of us is the more generous?"

"You are out of your senses! You have deceived me, and are doing all you can to make a fool of me. But you shall not go from here without swearing that you will not marry the lieutenant-general, or any one else, until you have been my mistress."

"Your mistress?" she said. "Can you think of such a thing? Could you not, at least, to soften the insult, say your wife?"

"That is what my uncles would say in my place, for they would care for nothing but your dowry; I do not care for that, but for you. Swear to be mine, and afterwards you shall be free: if I am too wretched to live, I will not trouble you, — I will blow my brains out."

"I swear," said Edmée, "that I will not marry any one until I am yours!"

"That is not it; swear that you will be mine first, before belonging to any other person."

"It is the same thing," she answered; "I swear it."

"On the gospel? on the name of Christ? on the salvation of your soul? on the tomb of your mother?"

"On the gospel, on the name of Christ, on the salvation of my soul, on the tomb of my mother."

"It is well!"

"An instant," she replied; "you must swear that my promise, and its execution, shall remain a secret between us; that my father shall never know it, or any person who might inform him of it."

"No one in the world. What need that it should be known, provided only that it is?"

She made me repeat the formula of the oath; and we rushed out with our hands clasped, in sign of mutual faith.

Our flight instantly became perilous. Edmée feared the besiegers almost as much as the besieged. We had the good fortune to meet none of them; but it was impossible to move rapidly. The night was so dark that we ran against the trees, and the ground so slippery that we could not keep from falling. A sudden sound startled us; but I immediately recognized the rattle of the chains used to hobble my grandfather's horse, — an animal remarkably old, but still strong and fiery, — the same which had brought me, ten years before, to la Roche Mauprat. He had nothing but a rope about his neck for a bridle. I made a noose of it, and passed it through his mouth; then, after throwing my coat upon his croup, and seating the fugitive, I unfastened his shackles, leaped upon him in my turn, and, striking him furiously with my heels, made him start off at full gallop. Happily for us, he knew the roads better than I, and did not need to see them to follow their windings without knocking against the trees. Still, he often slipped, and, in recovering himself, gave us jolts that would have unseated us again and again (equipped as we were),

if we had not been suspended between life and death. In such situations the most desperate ventures are the best, and God protects those whom man pursues. We seemed to have nothing more to fear, when the horse suddenly stumbled over a stump, and, catching his foot in a root on the surface of the ground, fell. Before we could rise (for we were both thrown) he was on his feet, and had taken flight in the darkness; I could hear his rapid steps dying away in the distance. I had caught Edmée in my arms; she was not hurt, but I had sprained my foot so badly that I could not take a step. Edmée thought that my leg was broken; and I was inclined to agree with her, I suffered so much. But soon I no longer thought of my suffering or anxiety. Edmée's tender solicitude made me forget everything else. In vain did I urge her to continue her flight without me, assuring her that she could now escape. We had come a long distance, the day would soon dawn, she would find houses, and everywhere would be protected against the Mauprats.

"I will not leave you," she answered, resolutely. "You have devoted yourself to me, and now I devote myself to you in my turn. We will both be saved, or we will perish together."

"I cannot be deceived," I cried; "that is a light that I see between the branches. Yonder is a house, Edmée; go and knock at the door. You can leave me here without anxiety, and you will find a guide to conduct you to your home."

"Whatever happens, I will not leave you," she said; "but I will see whether they can succor us."

"No," I said, "I will not allow you to knock at that door alone. That light, burning in the middle of the night, in a house situated in the depths of the woods, may be a lure."

I dragged myself to the door. It was cold to the touch, like metal; the walls were covered with ivy.

"Who is there?" cried some one within, before we had knocked.

"We are saved!" cried Edmée; "it is the voice of Patience."

"We are lost!" I said; "he and I are mortal enemies."

"Fear nothing," she answered; "follow me; it is God who has led us here."

"Yes, it is God who has led you here, daughter of heaven, star of the morning!" Patience said, as he opened the door; "and whosoever follows you shall be welcome to Gazeau Tower."

We penetrated into an elliptic vault, in the centre of which hung an iron lamp. By the light of this lugubrious luminary, and a scanty supply of brambles blazing on the hearth, we saw with surprise that Gazeau Tower was honored by an unexpected company. On one side of the hearth the pale and grave face of a man dressed in a priest's robe was visible in the flickering firelight. Opposite to him, a hat with a broad brim overshadowed a long, thin, olive-colored face, terminating in a meagre beard; while upon the wall was reflected the profile of a nose so attenuated that nothing in the world could be compared to it, unless it was a long rapier that lay across the knees of the same personage, and the face of a little dog, who, from his pointed snout, might have been taken for a gigantic rat: so that there reigned a mysterious harmony between these three sharp points — the nose of don Marcasse, the muzzle of his dog, and the blade of his sword. He rose slowly, and carried his hand to his head. The Jansenist priest did the same. The dog stretched out his head between the legs of his master, and, mute as he showed his teeth and put back his ears, but without barking.

"Hush, Blaireau!" said Marcasse.

VII.

WHEN the curé recognized Edmée he started back, uttering an exclamation of surprise; but this was nothing to the amazement of Patience, when he threw the light of the burning brand, which served him as a torch, upon my face.

"What!" he exclaimed, "the dove in company with the cub of the wolf! Can it be possible?"

"My friend," replied Edmée, — and to my astonishment she put her white hand into the large coarse hand of the sorcerer, — "give him the same welcome that you give me. I was a prisoner at la Roche Mauprat, and he has delivered me."

"May the sins of his race be pardoned him for that act!" said the curé.

Patience took me by the arm without saying a word, and led me to the fire. The curé undertook to examine my leg, while Edmée, with certain reservations, related our adventures, and inquired about the hunt, and her father. Patience could give her no news. He had heard the blowing of horns resounding through the woods, and the firing upon the wolves had disturbed his repose several times in the course of the day; but since the storm had begun to rage, the roaring of the wind had drowned all other sounds; and he knew nothing more of what had occurred in Varenne. Marcasse boldly climbed a ladder, which they used instead of the broken staircase in going to the upper stories of the tower; his dog followed him with wonderful agility. They soon descended, and he informed us that a red light illumined the sky in the direction of la Roche Mauprat. In spite of my hatred of this dwelling and its owners, I could not help feeling a sort of consternation on learning that the hereditary manor bearing my name, according to all appearances, had been taken, and set on fire; the announcement told me of our defeat and shame, and the fire was a seal of vassalage stamped upon my arms by those whom I had called beggars and slaves. I started up, and, had I not been prevented by the violent pain in my foot, should have rushed out.

"What is the matter?" said Edmée, who was by my side in an instant.

"The matter is," I replied roughly, "that I must return to la Roche Mauprat. It is my duty to let myself be killed rather than see my uncle forced to parley with yonder canaille."

"Canaille!" cried Patience, addressing me f
first time. "Who talks of canaille here? I mys
long to the canaille; it is my title, and I shall kno
to make it respected."

"Zounds! you will never make me respect it," I
repulsing the curé, who had made me resume my s

"It would not be for the first time, however," r
Patience, with a scornful smile.

"You remind me," I said, "that we have a
account to settle together."

With these words, in spite of the frightful pain
sprain, I again arose, and with a back blow sen
Marcasse, who was trying to succeed the curé i
office of peacemaker, tumbling over backwards
cinders. I meant the poor man no harm, but my
ments were somewhat rough; and he was so thi
frail that I could handle him with as much ea
he could a weasel. Patience stood erect befor
his arms were folded, his attitude was that of a
but a lightning gleam of hatred flashed from his
Restrained by his sense of hospitality, he was evi
waiting for me to strike the first blow, before giving
self the satisfaction of crushing me. I should not
kept him long in suspense, if Edmée, disregardi
real danger that there was in approaching a madma
me, had not seized me by the arm, saying in an i
ous tone, —

"Sit down and be quiet, I command you!"

The boldness and confidence with which she spok
prised, and at the same time pleased me. The aut
that she assumed over me seemed to sanction that
I claimed over her.

"You are right," I said, seating myself. Glanc
Patience, I added: "Another time."

"Amen!" he answered, shrugging his shoulders.

Marcasse had picked himself up with a great d
coolness; and while shaking off the ashes with wh
was covered, instead of quarrelling with me, he tr
his way, to lecture Patience. This, in itself, was
easy thing to do; but nothing could be less irritatin

his monosyllabic reproof, — a single note dropping quietly amid angry discussions, like an echo in a tempest.

"At your age," he said to his host, "not patient at all! All wrong, — yes, wrong — you!"

"How wicked you are!" Edmée said to me, allowing her hand to remain upon my shoulder. "Do not begin again, or I will abandon you."

To be scolded by her was a pleasure; I listened to her with secret satisfaction, and without noticing how completely we had changed parts during the last few moments. It was she now who commanded and threatened; she had resumed all her real superiority over me from the moment that we had crossed the threshold of Gazeau Tower. This wild place, these strange witnesses, this ferocious host, already represented the society into which I was about to enter, and whose chains I was so soon to feel.

"Come," she said, turning to Patience, "it is evident that we do not understand each other here; and, for my part, I am devoured by anxiety for my poor father, who is seeking me, and suffering torments about me, at this very moment. Good Patience, find me some means of joining him with this unhappy child, whom I cannot leave under your protection, since you do not love me sufficiently to be patient and compassionate with him."

"What do you say?" cried Patience, passing his hand over his forehead as if waking from a dream. "Yes, you are right! I am an old brute, an old fool. Daughter of God, say to this boy, — to this gentleman, — that I ask his pardon for the past, and for the present, that I put my poor cell at his command; will that suffice?"

"Yes, Patience," said the curé, "that is a sufficient apology; and, moreover, everything can be easily arranged: my horse is gentle and safe, — Mademoiselle de Mauprat will mount it; you and Marcasse will lead it by the bridle, and I will remain here with this wounded youth. I promise to take good care of him, and not to irritate him in any way. Is it not true, Monsieur Bernard, that you have no quarrel with me, and are very sure that I am not your enemy?"

"Just as you please," I answered; "I know nothing about it. Take good care of my cousin, and conduct her safely; as for me, I need nothing, and care for nobody. A bundle of straw, and a glass of wine, are all that I want, if it is a possible thing to have them."

"You shall have both," said Marcasse, handing me his bottle; "and in the meanwhile here is something to comfort you. I will go now to the stable, and prepare the horse."

"No, I will go myself," said Patience. "Look after the young man."

He went into an inner hall, which made an excellent stable for the curé's horse during the visits of the good priest. Returning, he led the animal into the room where we were seated, and, after arranging the mantle of the curé upon the saddle, placed Edmée upon it with paternal care.

"Wait a moment," she said, before allowing herself to be led out; "Monsieur le Curé, will you promise me, on the salvation of your soul, not to abandon my cousin until I can return with my father to seek him?"

"I swear it!" replied the curé.

"And you, Bernard," said Edmée, — "will you swear on your honor to await me here?"

"I can't say at all," I answered; "it will depend on the time of your absence and on my patience. But you know very well, cousin, that we shall meet again, and the sooner the better, as far as I am concerned."

By the light of the torch which Patience was waving to and fro as he examined the harness of the horse, I saw her beautiful face flush and grow pale. After a pause she raised her head, that had been sorrowfully bent, and looked at me fixedly, with a strange expression.

"Shall we start?" said Marcasse, opening the door.

"Forward! March!" cried Patience, taking the bridle. "Edmée, my child, be sure to bend your head low enough as we go under the door."

"What is the matter, Blaireau?" said Marcasse, pausing on the threshold, and thrusting forward the point of his sword, gloriously rusted with the blood of innumerable rodents.

Blaireau remained motionless; and if he had not been born dumb, as his master said, he would have barked. As it was, he gave warning of danger, by uttering a sort of dry cough, which was his greatest sign of anger and distress.

"Something is there," said Marcasse.

He advanced boldly into the darkness, after making a sign to the others not to proceed. The report of a gun startled us all. Edmée leaped lightly from her horse, and, with an instinctive movement that did not escape me, came and placed herself behind my chair. Patience rushed out of the tower; the curé seized the terrified horse, which was rearing and plunging dangerously; while Blaireau succeeded in barking. I forgot my pain, and with a single bound joined Patience.

A man riddled with wounds was lying weltering in his blood before the door. It was my uncle Laurent. Mortally wounded at the siege of la Roche Mauprat, he had dragged himself here, to die before our eyes. His brother Leonard was with him, and it was he who had just fired his last shot, which fortunately had struck no one. The peasant's first movement was to put himself on the defensive; but, on recognizing Marcasse, the fugitives, far from appearing hostile, implored shelter and succor; and no one thought of denying them the assistance which their deplorable situation demanded.

The *maréchaussée* were pursuing them. La Roche Mauprat was on fire. Louis and Pierre had been killed at the breach; Antoine, Jean, and Gaucher had taken flight in an opposite direction. In all probability they were already prisoners. No words can describe the horror of Laurent's last moments. His agony was brief, but frightful. His blasphemies made the curé turn pale. Scarcely had the door been closed, and the dying man laid upon the floor, when he was seized with a horrible rattling in his throat. Leonard, knowing of no remedy excepting brandy, snatched the bottle of Marcasse from my hands (reproaching and cursing me for my flight as he did so), and, forcing open his brother's clenched teeth with the blade of his hunting-knife, in spite of our remonstrances,

poured half its contents down his throat. The unhappy wretch bounded into the air, threw aloft his arms in desperate convulsions, drew himself up to his full height and fell stone dead upon the floor. We had no time for a funeral orison; the door resounded with the reiterated blows of new assailants.

"Open, in the name of the king!" cried several voices "open to the *maréchaussée!*"

"To the rescue!" cried Leonard, raising his knife and rushing to the door. "Slaves, show that you are men! And you, Bernard, retrieve your fault, wash out your shame in blood; do not suffer a single Mauprat to fall living into the hands of the gendarmes."

Animated by instinctive courage and pride, I was about to imitate him, when Patience sprang forward, and throwing him to the ground with herculean strength, put his knee upon his breast, and cried to Marcasse to open the door. Six gendarmes rushed into the tower, and aimed their guns at us.

"Halloo, gentlemen!" cried Patience, "here is your prisoner; take him, and harm no one. If I had been alone I should have defended him, or helped him to escape; but there are honest people in this old tower, who ought not to suffer for the crimes of a villain, and I am not at all anxious to expose them in an engagement. Here is Mauprat. Remember it is your duty to deliver him safe and sound into the hands of justice. The other one is dead."

"Surrender, Monsieur!" said the sergeant of the *maréchaussée*, securing and disarming Leonard.

"No Mauprat will ever live to be dragged into court," replied Leonard, with a gloomy air. "I surrender, but you will get nothing but my skin."

He made no further resistance, and they thrust him into a chair. While they were preparing to bind him he turned to the curé.

"A single, a last act of charity, my father," he said "Give me what remains in the bottle; I am dying of thirst and exhaustion."

The good curé handed him the bottle, which he emptied at a single draught. His distorted face assumed an

expression of frightful tranquillity. He seemed absorbed, inert, almost unconscious. But, beneath this apparent apathy, he was nerving himself for a final effort. At the moment when the gendarmes were binding his feet, he snatched a pistol from the belt of one of them, and blew his brains out.

I was overwhelmed with horror at this frightful spectacle. Plunged in a mournful stupor, no longer comprehending what took place around me, I remained petrified, and did not perceive that for some moments I had been the object of a serious discussion between the *maréchaussée* and my host. One of the gendarmes thought that he recognized me, and insisted that I was a Mauprat Coupe-Jarret. Patience denied this, and pretended that I was one of the game-keepers of M. Hubert de Mauprat, and was escorting his daughter. Annoyed by this discussion, I was about to name myself, when I saw what appeared to be a spectre, rising by my side. It was Edmée, who had been hidden between the wall and the poor terrified horse of the curé, which, like a living bulwark, with extended limbs and eye on fire, had stood before her, protecting her with its body. She was pale as a corpse, and her lips were so contracted with horror, that, for a time, she could only express herself by signs, although she made superhuman efforts to speak. The sergeant, touched by her youth and suffering condition, waited with the utmost deference, until she could succeed in explaining herself. Finally, she demanded that I should not be treated as a prisoner, but should be conducted with her to her father's chateau, where, she pledged her word, that satisfactory explanations and guarantees would be furnished upon my account. The curé and his companions confirmed this statement, and we set out together. Edmée rode on the horse of the sergeant, who took an animal belonging to one of his men; the horse of the curé was assigned to me; Patience and the curé walked between us; the *maréchaussée* rode on either side; while Marcasse, always impassible amid the general horror and consternation, marched in front. Two gendarmes remained at the tower, to guard the bodies and report the facts.

VIII.

WE proceeded on our way through the forest for
a league without interruption, and only pausi
shout wherever the road forked. Edmée, convince
her father would not return to his house without fi
her, had implored her companions to take this n
of assisting her to join him, and the gendarmes had
plied, although with visible reluctance, as they f
being surprised and attacked by some of the fugitiv
la Roche Mauprat. On the way they informed us
the chateau had been conquered at the third assault.
to that time the assailants had held their strength i
serve. The lieutenant of the *maréchaussée* hope
get possession of the donjon without destroying it,
above all, to capture the besieged without killing t
but their desperate resistance had made this impos
The besiegers suffered so much in their second ass
that they had no further choice between taking ext
measures and retreating. The outer works wer
on fire, and in the third engagement they spare
efforts to gain a decisive victory. Three Mauprats
killed on the ruined bulwarks; the other five disappe
Two parties, of six men each, were despatched in pu
of them in opposite directions. Traces of the fugi
were discovered immediately, and the men who ga
these details had followed close at the heels of La
and Leonard; they were so near them that they had
the first of these unhappy wretches several times, o
short distance from Gazeau Tower. They had heard
cry out that he was killed, and it was undoubtedly
rent who had carried him to the dwelling of the sorc
This Laurent was the only one of my uncles wh
served the least pity, for he was the only one who
showed any capacity for leading a better life. He
sometimes chivalric in his brigandage, and his fero
soul was capable of affection. I was extremely tou
therefore, by his tragic death, and I rode along me

ically, absorbed in gloomy thoughts, and resolved that I would end my days as he had done, if, in my turn, I should be exposed to the outrages to which he had refused to submit.

Suddenly the blowing of horns and barking of dogs announced the approach of a party of hunters. We replied to their signals by shouts and cries upon our side, and Patience ran forward to see who they were. Edmée, impatient to find her father, and conquering her terror for his sake, whipped her horse, galloped forward, and reached the hunters first. When we joined the party I saw her clasped in the arms of an old man of unusual stature, and with a venerable face. He was richly dressed: his hunting-vest embroidered with gold; and the magnificent Norman horse which a jockey was leading behind him, struck me with such admiration, that I imagined myself in the presence of a prince. His manifestations of tenderness to his daughter were so new to me, that I regarded them as exaggerated, and unworthy the dignity of a man, while, at the same time, they inspired me with a sort of brutal jealousy; it did not occur to me that a man so well dressed could be my uncle. Edmée talked to him in a low voice, and with great vivacity. This conference lasted for some moments, after which the old man came and embraced me cordially. I submitted to his caresses and protestations in mute astonishment. A tall young man, remarkably handsome, and as elegantly dressed as M. Hubert, came next, and pressing my hand, loaded me with thanks which I did not understand. Afterwards he entered into a discussion with the gendarmes, and I gathered from their conversation that he was the lieutenant-general of the province, and was ordering them to set me at liberty, and allow me to follow my uncle, the chevalier, to his chateau, where he promised, on his honor, to answer for me. The gendarmes took leave of us, for the chevalier and lieutenant-general had a numerous escort of their own people, all armed, and many of them carrying torches, so that we had nothing further to fear from an accidental encounter with the fugitives. The warm marks of friendship which the

chevalier bestowed upon Patience and Marcasse, supplied me with new food for wonder. As for the curé, he stood upon a footing of equality with these two noblemen. The bickerings of the clergy of the diocese had compelled him to abandon his parsonage, and for several months he had been chaplain of the chateau de Saint Sévère.

How shall I describe the amazement with which I beheld the new world unfolding before my eyes? All the tenderness of which Edmée was the object, these family affections of which I had formed no previous conception, the cordial and agreeable relations existing between respectable plebeians and benevolent patricians; in a word, all that I saw and heard seemed to me a dream. I gazed, but without appreciating in the least the meaning of what I beheld. My brain became more active, however, when, as our party was setting out again, the lieutenant-general (M. de la Marche) thrust his horse forward between Edmée's and mine, as if he had a right to be by her side. I remembered her telling me at la Roche Mauprat that he was her fiancé. Hatred and rage took possession of my heart; and I know not what absurdity I should have committed, if Edmée, who seemed to divine what was passing in my ferocious soul, had not told him that she wished to speak to me, and given me back my place near her.

"What have you got to say to me?" I demanded, with more eagerness than politeness.

"Nothing!" she answered in a low voice. "I shall have much to say to you later. Until then you must obey my commands in all things."

"And why the devil must I obey your commands, cousin?"

She hesitated a little before replying, and then said with a manifest effort, —

"Because it is so that a man proves his love for a woman."

"Do you think, then, that I do not love you?" I rejoined, abruptly.

"How should I know?" she answered.

I was greatly astonished at her uncertainty, and tried in my way, to dispel it.

"Are you not beautiful?" I said, "and am not I a young man? Perhaps you think I am too much of a child to notice the beauty of a woman, but it is not so; now that my head is calm, and that I am sad, and very serious, I can assure you I am more in love with you than I thought. The more I look at you the more beautiful you seem to me. I did not know that a woman could seem so beautiful. It is true, I shall not sleep so long as ——"

"Silence!" she said, dryly.

"Oh! you are afraid that gentleman will hear me," I resumed, pointing to M. de la Marche. "Be easy; I know how to keep an oath, and as you are a girl of a good family, I hope you can say the same."

She was silent. The road was so narrow that only two could go abreast. It was very dark (the servants had extinguished their torches after Edmée had been found), and although the chevalier and lieutenant-general were riding directly behind us, I was on the point of putting my arm about her waist, when she spoke again, in a sad and feeble voice:

"My cousin," she said, "forgive me if I do not talk to you. I do not understand what you are saying. I am exhausted with fatigue. It seems to me that I am going to die. Happily we are near the end of our journey. Swear to me that you will love my father, that you will be governed by his advice in all things, and will take no step, whatever it may be, without consulting me. Give me your word that I can rely upon you, if you wish me to believe in your friendship."

"Oh! as to my friendship," I replied. "I don't care whether you believe in that or not, but I want you to believe in my love. I swear to do all that I can to please you; and you, — will you not promise me anything in your turn, freely, of your own accord?"

"What can I promise you that does not belong to you?" she said, in a serious tone. "You have saved my honor — my life is yours."

The first glimmering of the dawn was beginning to brighten the eastern horizon; emerging from the forest,

we arrived at the village de Saint Sévère, and soon after entered the court of the chateau. Edmée fell into her father's arms as she dismounted from her horse—she was pale as death. M. de la Marche uttered a cry, and helped to carry her to the house. She had fainted. The curé took charge of me. I felt great anxiety about my fate. The natural distrust of the brigand revived within me as soon as I was removed from the fascinating influence of the being who had succeeded in drawing me from my den. Like a wounded wolf, I cast gloomy glances upon all who approached me, and held myself in readiness to attack the first person who should make an equivocal gesture, or utter a doubtful word. I was shown to a splendid apartment; and a collation, which seemed to me incredibly luxurious, was immediately set before me. The curé showed the greatest interest in me; he succeeded in reassuring me in a measure, and then left me to look after his friend Patience. My troubles, and lingering anxiety, did not rob me of the generous appetite which belongs to youth. Had it not been for the eager and respectful attentions of a valet much better dressed than I was, who stood behind my chair, and whose courtesy I could not help acknowledging every time he darted forward to anticipate my wants, I should have made a fearful breakfast. As it was, I was greatly restrained by the silk stockings and green livery of the good valet. It was much worse when he knelt down and began pulling off my shoes and stockings, before putting me to bed. At first I thought he was mocking me, and came very near giving him a blow on the head with my fist; but he performed his task with so much gravity, that I remained staring at him in stupefied astonishment.

At first, on finding myself in bed, without weapons, and with people who came and went around me on tip-toe, my suspicions returned. I took advantage of a moment when I was left alone to rise and snatch from the table, which was only partially cleared, the longest knife that I could find. Satisfied with this precaution, I went to bed much more tranquil, and fell into a deep sleep, with my knife firmly clasped in my hand.

When I awoke the sun was setting; a softened reflection of my red damask curtains fell on the exquisitely fine bed-linen, and the gilded pomegranates, that ornamented the canopy over my head, shone in the evening light. My bed was so fine and soft, that I felt like apologizing for having laid down in it. As I arose I saw an old man, with a sweet and venerable face, who drew aside my curtains, and smiled upon me. It was the chevalier Hubert de Mauprat; he had been watching by my side, and now questioned me with deep interest about the state of my health. I tried to be polite and grateful, but the terms I made use of were so different from his, that I was mortified and embarrassed by my boorishness, without knowing why I suffered. To complete my misery, the knife which I had taken as the companion of my slumbers, dislodged by a careless movement, slipped, and fell at M. de Mauprat's feet. He picked it up, looked at it, and then looked at me with extreme surprise. I became red as fire, and stammered I know not what. I thought he would reproach me for insulting his hospitality; but he was too polite to insist upon a further explanation. He quietly laid the knife upon the mantlepiece, and, returning to my side, spoke as follows: —

"Bernard, I know now that I am indebted to you for the life of the being who is dearest to me in the world. All that I have shall be consecrated to prove to you my gratitude and esteem. My daughter also owes you a sacred debt. Have no anxiety, therefore, about your future. I know to what persecutions and to what vengeance you exposed yourself to come to us; but I also know from what a frightful existence my friendship and devotion will be able to save you. You are an orphan, and I have no son; will you take me for your father?"

I stared wildly at the chevalier. I could not believe my ears. All my sensations were paralyzed by surprise and timidity; I could not utter a word. The chevalier himself was somewhat surprised; he had not expected to find a nature so brutally uncultivated.

"Ah, well!" he said, after a pause, "we must wait awhile; you will soon get accustomed to us. Shake

hands, — that will show me that you have confidence in me, and I shall be satisfied. I will go now, and will send you your servant; command him as you choose — he is yours. There is only one promise which I must exact from you; and that is, that you will not go beyond the walls of the park until I have taken measures to secure you from the pursuit of justice. It is possible that the accusations which have been brought against your uncles may be made to rebound upon your head."

"My uncles!" I said, passing my hands over my head. "Have I had a terrible dream? Where are they? What has become of la Roche Mauprat?"

"La Roche Mauprat has been saved from the flames," he answered. "Some of the outer buildings were destroyed; but I shall consider it my duty to repair your chateau, and to purchase the fief from your uncle's creditors, into whose hands it has fallen. As for your uncles — you are probably the only heir of a name that it will be your duty to rehabilitate."

"The only one!" I cried. "Five Mauprats fell last night; but the three others?"

"The sixth, — Gaucher, — perished in his flight. He was drowned in the pool *des Froids*, where his body was found this morning. Neither Jean nor Antoine have been discovered; but the horse of the one and cloak of the other, found near the spot where Gaucher's body was lying, are sinister indications that their fate was similar to his. If any Mauprat has escaped, however, he will never reappear in this vicinity, for there is no longer any hope for him here; and, as they have drawn down upon their own heads these inevitable storms, it is better for them and for us, who have the misfortune to bear the same name, that they should have come to this tragic end. It is better for all that they should have perished with arms in their hands; since, otherwise, they would inevitably have been condemned to an infamous death upon the gallows. What God has decided, we must accept. It was a harsh sentence. Eight men, in the pride of their youth and strength, called to render a terrible account! — let us pray for them, Bernard; and by

good works let us endeavor to repair the evil which they have done, and to wash out the stains which their crimes have imprinted upon our escutcheon."

In these concluding words the character of the chevalier was fully portrayed. He was pious, just, and charitable; but the precepts of Christian humility in his case, as in that of most noblemen, had no power to subdue the pride of rank. He would willingly allow a poor man to sit at his table, and, on Good Friday, he washed the feet of a dozen beggars, but he adhered with none the less devotion to the prejudices of his caste. The guilt of his cousins, in forfeiting their dignity as men, had been greatly increased, in his opinion, by the fact that they were noblemen; if they had been plebeians he would not have blamed them with nearly so much severity. In the latter case, their crimes, according to him, would not have been half so heinous. For a long time I shared this conviction; it flowed in my blood, if I may express myself thus. I rejected it only in consequence of the rude lessons of destiny.

The chevalier confirmed all that his daughter had told me. Ever since my birth he had felt a strong desire to adopt me; but his brother Tristan had opposed his wishes with obstinate fury. As he referred to this fact, the brow of the chevalier clouded.

"You do not know," he said, "what fatal consequences followed these efforts of mine on your behalf; fatal for me and for you also. But let it pass! Let the gloomy past remain forever enveloped in mystery — a frightful mystery, the blood of Atrides!"

He took my hand, and added, with a dejected air, —

"Bernard, we have both been the victims of a wicked family. This is not the moment to accuse those who are appearing this very hour before the formidable tribunal of God; but they have done me irreparable injury, — they have broken my heart. The wrongs which they have done you shall be repaired: I swear it by the memory of your mother. They have deprived you of education, they have associated you in their robberies; but your soul has remained great and pure as was that

of the angel who gave you birth. You will retrieve the involuntary errors of your youth, you will receive an education suitable to your rank, and will rebuild the honor of your fallen house. Is it not so, Bernard? do you not desire to accomplish this sacred task? For my part it is the dearest wish of my soul to see it accomplished. I will kneel at your feet to obtain your confidence, and I shall obtain it, for heaven has destined you to be my son. Ah! at one time I dreamed of a more complete union. When I made my second attempt to adopt you, if you had been intrusted to my care you would have been brought up with my daughter, and would certainly have become her husband. It was not the will of God. You must begin your education, and she has completed hers. She is old enough to be established; and, besides, she has made her choice. She loves M. de la Marche, whom she is upon the eve of marrying, as she has undoubtedly told you."

He was silent, and I tried to answer him; but I could only stammer a few confused words. The caresses and the generous protestations of this noble old man, moved me deeply; while listening to him I felt another nature, as it were, awakening within me. But when he pronounced the name of his future son-in-law, all my savage instincts were aroused, and I felt that no principle of social loyalty would induce me to renounce my claim upon one whom I regarded as my booty. I grew pale and red; I was suffocating. Luckily we were interrupted by the abbé Aubert (the Jansenist curé), who came to inquire about the consequences of my fall. The chevalier had not heard before about my sprain; so many important events had occurred, that this circumstance had been overlooked. He sent for his physician, and I was surrounded by affectionate cares, which seemed to me very puerile, but to which gratitude compelled me to submit.

I had not dared ask the chevalier about his daughter. With the abbé I was bolder. He informed me that they were feeling quite uneasy on account of the prolongation and restlessness of her sleep; and the phy-

sician, who returned in the evening to make a new application to my sprain, told me that she had a great deal of fever, and that he was afraid she was going to be seriously ill.

In fact, she was sufficiently ill for several days to make her friends exceedingly anxious. In the terrible scenes through which she had passed she had displayed great energy; but a violent reaction had followed her excitement, and she was prostrated. I also was obliged to keep my bed; I could not take a step without excessive pain, and the physician threatened me with being nailed to my couch for months unless I would consent to remain perfectly quiet for a few days. As I was in full health, and had never been sick in my life, the sudden change from my active habits to this luxurious captivity brought on a state of suffering which is indescribable. Only he who has lived in the depths of the forest, knowing only the rude enjoyments of a savage and ferocious existence, can comprehend the sort of terror and despair that I experienced on finding myself shut up for more than a week between four silk curtains. The luxury of my apartment, the gilding of my bed, the eager attentions of the servants, — everything, even to the excellence of my food, trifling details which had pleased me for a day, became odious to me at the end of twenty-four hours. The chevalier, although considerate and tender, paid me but short visits, for he was absorbed by the sickness of his cherished daughter. The abbé was goodness itself. I dared not tell either of them how unhappy I was; but, when I was alone, I wanted to roar like a lion in his cage, and, at night, in my dreams, the moss of the woods, the screen of the trees of the forest, and even the gloomy battlements of la Roche Mauprat, appeared to me like the scenery of a terrestrial Paradise. At other times, the tragic events that had accompanied and succeeded my flight from la Roche Mauprat recurred to my memory with such intense vividness, that, even when awake, I was a prey to a sort of delirium.

A visit from M. de la Marche increased the inco-

IX.

AT last, one morning, after we had breakfasted, M. Hubert took me to his daughter's room. When the door of her chamber opened, I felt almost suffocated by the warm and perfumed air that was wafted towards me. How simple and charming was this chamber, hung and furnished in *toile de Perse*, with a white ground, and ornamented with large china vases, filled with the most fragrant flowers! In a gilded cage African birds sported, and sang with sweet, melodious voices. The carpet was softer to the foot than the moss of the woods in the month of June. I was so agitated that I could scarcely see; my feet knocked against each other awkwardly, and I stumbled over the furniture without being able to advance. Edmée was reclining in an invalid's chair, playing indifferently with a mother-of-pearl fan. She seemed to me more beautiful than ever; but so changed, that I felt frozen with fear, in spite of my rapture at seeing her again. She extended her hand, but I did not know whether I would be allowed to kiss it before her father. I did not hear what she said, although I felt that her words were affectionate. After greeting me she sank back upon her pillow, as if overcome with fatigue, and closed her eyes.

"I have some work to do," said the chevalier, in a low voice. "Keep your cousin company, but do not make her talk too much, for she is still very weak."

This advice really sounded like raillery. Edmée was probably pretending to be sleepy, to conceal a little secret embarrassment on her part; and, as for me, I was so incapable of overcoming her reserve, that it was really cruel to recommend me to be silent.

The chevalier opened a door at one end of the room, and went out; but I heard him cough every now and then, and knew, therefore, that his cabinet was only separated from his daughter's chamber by a single partition. The mere fact of being alone with her made me happy

in spite of my embarrassment, as long as she seemed to be asleep. She did not see me, and I could gaze upon her at my ease. She was pale and white as her muslin wrapper, or her satin slippers, trimmed with swans'-down; her delicate, transparent hand looked to me like an unknown jewel. Never before had I appreciated the true charm of a woman's beauty. My ideal of beauty, hitherto, had been youth and health, combined with a sort of virile audacity. I had understood Edmée better at our first meeting, when, dressed in her riding costume, she had impersonated, in a measure, this ideal; now I studied her anew, and could no longer conceive that she was the same being whom I had held in my arms at la Roche Mauprat. The place, the situation, and my own ideas, which were beginning to receive some feeble illumination from without, — all combined to render this second interview very different from the first.

The strange and unquiet pleasure that I experienced in gazing upon her was soon disturbed by the entrance of a certain mademoiselle Leblanc, a duenna who performed the duties of *femme de chambre* in the private apartments of her mistress, and those of her companion in the drawing-room. Edmée had probably ordered her not to leave us, — at all events, she seated herself by the chair of the invalid so as completely to hide her beautiful face; presenting, instead, to my disappointed eyes, her own long and angular back. Then she took her work from her pocket, and began quietly to knit. In the meanwhile, the birds warbled, the chevalier coughed, Edmée slept, or seemed to sleep, and I remained at the end of the room, with my head bent over the pages of a book which I was holding upside down.

After some time I noticed that Edmée was no longer asleep. She was talking in whispers to her attendant; and I imagined that the latter glanced at me stealthily from time to time. To avoid being examined in this way, and also to deceive those who were watching me (an instinctive cunning was one of my savage characteristics), I put my book upon the pier-table at which I was seated, and, laying my head upon it, remained motionless,

as if asleep, or absorbed. My stratagem was duly rewarded. By degrees Edmée and her companion raised their voices, and I heard what they were saying.

"It amounts to the same thing. Mademoiselle must acknowledge that she has chosen a droll page."

"Leblanc, you make me laugh with your pages. Pray do people have pages nowadays? I tell you he is my father's adopted son."

"Certainly, M. le Chevalier has the right to adopt a son; but where on earth did he find such a strange animal?"

I glanced at them from under the cover of my book, and saw that Edmée was laughing behind her fan. She was amused by the gossip of this old maid, who had the reputation of being a wit, and was allowed to say what she chose. I was extremely wounded to see that my cousin was making fun of me.

"He looks like a bear, a wolf, a badger, a vulture, rather than a man," continued Mademoiselle Leblanc. "What hands! what legs! And remember he has been polished up a little, and is quite respectable now in comparison to what he was. You should have seen him when he first arrived, in his wagoner's frock and leather gaiters. It was enough to make one tremble."

"Do you think so?" replied Edmée. "For my part, I liked him better in his poacher's costume. It was more becoming to his face and figure."

"He looked like a bandit; Mademoiselle could not have noticed him."

"Yes, indeed!"

The tone in which she pronounced these words, — yes, indeed, — made me tremble; and once again, through some mysterious association, I felt upon my lips the impression of the kiss which she had given me at la Roche Mauprat.

"If his hair were only dressed it would be something," continued the duenna; "but he cannot be persuaded to use powder. Saint-Jean tells me that the sight of the powder-puff makes him furious. The other day, when he was timidly carrying it to his head, he leaped

up, crying, 'Do what you please, but have the goodness to do without that flour. I want to be able to move my head without coughing and sneezing.' Heavens! what a savage!"

"He was in the right, though, after all. What an absurdity to powder the hair! If it was not the fashion, every one would acknowledge that it was an ugly and inconvenient custom. Are not those great black locks much more beautiful?"

"Those great black locks indeed! A lion's mane. It frightens me."

"Besides, children do not use powder; and that boy is still a child."

"A child? Heavens! what a darling! He would eat children for his breakfast! He is an ogre! But where did the fellow come from? Did M. le Chevalier take him from the plough to bring him here? His name is —— what is his name, anyhow?"

"Curious,—I told you that his name is Bernard."

"Bernard, and nothing more?"

"Nothing, for the present. What are you looking at?"

"He is sleeping like a dormouse! What a great dunce! I am looking to see if he resembles M. le Chevalier. A youthful indiscretion, perhaps; your father may have had a day of forgetfulness with some peasant wench."

"Come, come! Leblanc, you are going too far."

"Heavens! mademoiselle, has not M. le Chevalier been young like the rest of the world? Do the follies of youth prevent a virtuous old age?"

"You know, without doubt, by experience. But listen: I advise you not to tease that young man. You may have guessed correctly; at all events, my father requires that he should be treated like a child of the family."

"How agreeable that must be for mademoiselle! As for me, it is none of my business; I have nothing to do with the young gentleman."

"Ah, Leblanc! If you were only thirty years younger!"

"But tell me: did monsieur consult mademoiselle before establishing yonder great brigand at his house?"

"Can you doubt it? Is there a better father than mine in the whole world?"

"Mademoiselle is very good also. There are a great many young ladies who would not have been so amiable."

"And why not? There is nothing disagreeable about the boy; when he has been well educated —"

"He will always be an ugly scarecrow."

"He is very far from being ugly, my dear Leblanc; you are too old, — you are no longer good authority."

Their conversation was interrupted by the chevalier, who came to look for a book.

"What!" he said, calmly, "is Mademoiselle Leblanc here? I thought you were having a tête-a-tête with my son! Ah, well! have you talked together? Have you told him, Edmée, that you will be his sister? Are you content with her, Bernard?"

My answers could compromise no one; they always consisted of four or five incoherent words, quickly cut short by shame. M. de Mauprat returned to his cabinet, and I resumed my seat, hoping that my cousin would send her attendant away, and talk to me. But in this I was disappointed. They exchanged a few words together, in a low voice; the duenna remained, and two mortal hours passed slowly away without my daring to budge from my chair. I believe that Edmée was really asleep. When the bell rang for dinner, her father returned to take me away; and before leaving the room he said again, —

"Ah, well! have you talked together?"

"Yes, my good father," Edmée replied, with an assurance that confounded me.

This conduct on the part of my cousin seemed to me to prove that she had been playing with me, and that now she feared my reproaches. And yet hope returned to my heart, when I remembered the tone of her conversation with Mademoiselle Leblanc. I went so far as to suppose that she feared arousing her father's suspicions, and was pretending to be indifferent to me, only that she

might draw me the more surely to her arms when the right moment had come. In this uncertainty I waited. But days and nights passed away, and still I received no explanation of her conduct; she sent me no secret message, bidding me have patience. At one o'clock in the morning she came to the drawing-room; in the evening she dined, and played piquet or chess with her father. During all this time she was so well guarded that I had no chance to exchange even a look with her; and the rest of the day she remained in her own chamber, where she was unapproachable. Several times, seeing that I was suffering from ennui in the sort of captivity in which I was forced to live, the chevalier said to me, —

"Go and talk to Edmée; go to her room, and tell her that I sent you."

I was ready enough to obey him, but my alacrity was of no avail. They heard me coming, recognizing me, undoubtedly, by my heavy and uncertain step, and refused to admit me. I knocked in vain; the door was never opened; I was desperate, furious —

(The old man paused, and for a moment remained absorbed in thought, — after which he continued his story.)

I must interrupt this account of my personal impressions (he said), in order to tell you what was occurring at this time in the unfortunate family of the Mauprats. Jean and Antoine had really escaped; and, although they were pursued promptly and vigorously, it proved impossible to arrest them. Their property was seized, and the sale of the fief of la Roche Mauprat was ordered by the court. The actual sale, however, did not take place. M. Hubert de Mauprat put an end to the proceedings: he, himself, became the purchaser; my uncle's creditors were satisfied, and the titles of the property of la Roche Mauprat passed into my hands.

The little garrison of la Roche Mauprat had been made up of the lowest order of adventurers, all of whom disappeared with their masters. It had been reduced long since, as you know, to very few individuals. Two or three perished, others took flight; one alone was thrown

into prison. He was tried for his life, and suffered for all. There was great discussion, also, about instituting proceedings for contumacy against Jean and Antoine de Mauprat (the pond in which Gaucher was drowned had been thoroughly drained; and, as their bodies had not been found, their flight was thought to be proved); and, but for the opposition of the chevalier, they would have been tried. Believing that their disgrace would stain anew the honor of his name, he was unwilling to have them sentenced. As if any sentence could add to the horror of the name of Mauprat! He brought to bear all M. de la Marche's influence, and his own (which was very great in the province, especially on account of his excellent moral character), to hush up the affair, and succeeded in doing so. As for me, although it is certain that I had been implicated in many of my uncle's crimes, there was no thought of accusing me, even before the tribunal of public opinion. Amid the abuse that was lavished upon them, I was regarded as a young captive; it was asserted that I had been the victim of their cruelty, and had an excellent nature. The chevalier, in his benevolent generosity, and eagerness to rehabilitate the family, greatly exaggerated my good qualities, and spread the report everywhere that I was a miracle of goodness and intelligence.

On the day that M. Hubert purchased the estate, he came early in the morning to my room, with his daughter and the abbé; and, after showing me the deeds through which the sacrifice had been consummated (la Roche Mauprat was worth about two hundred thousand francs), he informed me that it was his intention to put me in immediate possession, not merely of my part of the inheritance, which was inconsiderable, but also of half the income of the property. At the same time he proposed leaving me the whole estate, lands and products, in his will, all upon one condition, viz.: that I would consent to receive an education suitable to my rank.

The chevalier had made these arrangements with the utmost goodness and simplicity, partly out of gratitude for what he knew of my conduct to his daughter, and

partly through family pride; but he had not anticipated the obstinacy with which I would oppose him about my education. I cannot describe the discontent that I felt at the word condition. I imagined at once that my uncle's proposition was the result of some manœuvre of Edmée's, and that she was trying to free herself from her promise.

"'My uncle," I replied, after listening to his magnificent offers in absolute silence, "I thank you for what you wish to do for me; but it would be unbecoming in me to accept your bounty. I have no need of a fortune. All that a man like me wants is his daily bread, a gun, a hunting-dog, and the first hut that he may chance to find on the borders of the forest. Since you are so good as to act as my guardian, pay me the rent of my eighth of the estate on the fief, and do not insist upon my learning Latin. A gentleman knows enough when he knows how to bring down a water-fowl, and sign his name. I am not anxious to be the seigneur of la Roche Mauprat; it is enough for me to have been a slave there. You are a worthy man, and, on my honor, I love you; but I do not like conditions. I have never done anything for interest; and I would rather remain ignorant forever than become a *bel esprit* at the cost of my neighbor. As for my cousin, never would I consent to rob her of her fortune. I know well that she would willingly sacrifice part of her dowry to save herself—"

Edmée, who was very pale, and had seemed abstracted hitherto, turned her flashing glance upon me as I uttered these words, and, interrupting me, said boldly,—

"'To save myself from what, if you please, Bernard?"

In spite of her courage I saw that she was very much agitated, for she broke her fan in attempting to close it. Gazing upon her with the undisguised malice of the clown, I replied,—

"To save yourself, cousin, from the necessity of keeping a certain promise which you made me at la Roche Mauprat."

She turned paler than before, and her look of terror was badly disguised by a smile of scorn.

"What promise did you make him, Edmée?" said the chevalier, turning towards her ingenuously.

At the same time the curé stealthily pressed my arm, and I comprehended that the confessor of my cousin was in possession of our secret.

I shrugged my shoulders; although their alarm was a direct insult to me, I pitied them.

"She promised," I replied, smiling, "to regard me always as her brother and friend. Were not those your words, Edmée? and do you think money can redeem such a pledge?"

She arose with vivacity, and, holding out her hand to me, said in an agitated voice, —

"You are right, Bernard; you have a noble heart, and I will never pardon myself for having doubted you for an instant."

I saw a tear trembling upon her eyelid; and I pressed her hand rather too hard, as it seemed, for she uttered a little cry, but accompanied it with a charming smile. The chevalier embraced me, and the curé repeated several times, while wriggling about on his chair, —

"That is fine! That is noble! That is very fine! He required no books to learn that," he added, addressing the chevalier. "God writes His word in the hearts of His children, and inspires them with His spirit."

"You will see," said the chevalier, deeply moved, "that this Mauprat will redeem the honor of his family. Now, my dear Bernard," he continued, "I will no longer talk to you about business. I know now how I ought to act, and you cannot prevent me from doing what I think right to rehabilitate my name in your person. The only true rehabilitation is guaranteed to me by your noble sentiments; but there is yet another which you will not refuse to attempt: that of talent and intelligence. Your affection for us will induce you, I hope, to acquire a love for knowledge, but it is not time yet to talk about this. I respect your pride, and will secure your prosperity without conditions. Come, abbé, you must accompany me to the city to my lawyer. The carriage is ready. You, children, can breakfast together. Bernard, offer your arm to your cousin, — or rather to your sister. Learn to be courteous in your manners, since, with her at least, courtesy is the true expression of your heart."

"You say truly, my uncle," I replied, seizing Edmée's arm a little rudely, to lead her down stairs.

She trembled, but her cheeks had resumed their natural color, and an affectionate smile played over her lips.

When we were seated opposite each other at the table, however, our good understanding was soon chilled. We both became embarrassed. If we had been alone I should have put an end to the awkwardness of the situation, by one of the sudden sallies that I forced myself to make when I became too much ashamed of my timidity; but the presence of Saint-Jean, who was waiting upon us, condemned me to silence on the subject that interested me most. In self-defence I began to talk about Patience, inquiring of Edmée how it was that she felt such a friendship for him, and what I was to think of the pretended sorcerer. She gave me a full account of the rustic philosopher, and told me that it was the abbé Aubert who had taken her to Gazeau Tower. She had been deeply impressed with the intelligence and wisdom of the anchorite, and conversed with him with extreme pleasure. Patience, upon his part, had conceived such an affection for her, that for some time he had ceased to live in such strict seclusion, and came quite often to Saint Sévère to visit Edmée and the abbé.

You can easily imagine that she had some difficulty in making her explanations intelligible to me. I was very much struck with the praises that she bestowed upon Patience, and the sympathy she expressed for his revolutionary ideas. This was the first time I had ever heard a peasant spoken of as a man. You must remember, also, that I had regarded the sorcerer of Gazeau Tower as far below the ordinary peasant, and you will then be able to judge of my astonishment when I found that Edmée considered him superior to most of the men whom she knew, and when I heard her taking his part against the nobility. The main idea suggested to me by her conversation was, that education was not so necessary as the chevalier and the abbé wished me to believe.

"I can scarcely read any better than Patience," I said, "and I wish you would take as much pleasure in my so-

ciety as in his; but you don't seem to do so cousin, for since I have been here —"

We had quitted the table; and, rejoicing to find myself alone with her at last, I was going to become much more explicit, when who should we meet, as we entered the drawing-room, but M. de la Marche, who had just arrived, and was coming into the room by an opposite door. I devoted him, in my heart, to all the devils, for his untimely interruption.

M. de la Marche was a young nobleman of the most fashionable style of the period. In love with the new philosophy, a follower of Voltaire and a great admirer of Franklin, he was more honest than intelligent; for, although pretending to understand his oracles, he had less ability than desire to do so; a bad logician, he lost faith in his ideas, and abandoned his political hopes on the day that France undertook to realize them; in other respects he was full of high-flown sentiments, and believed himself much more confiding and romantic than he really was; he prided himself upon his disinterestedness and independence, and was rather more faithful to the prejudices of his rank, and much more sensitive to the opinion of the world, than he would have been willing to allow: this was the man. His appearance was very prepossessing, but I considered him excessively insipid, for I regarded him with the most ridiculous animosity. His gracious manners seemed to me obsequious, especially when he addressed Edmée. I should have blushed to imitate them, and yet I was constantly trying to outdo him in the little services that he rendered her. We went out into the park, which was very large, and through which the Indre flowed, — a mere rivulet in this part of its course. During the walk he made himself agreeable in a thousand ways: he could not see a violet without gathering it to offer to my cousin. But, when we reached the brook, we found that the plank over which we had crossed it at this place had been broken and swept away by the storms of the preceding day. Without asking Edmée's permission, I took her in my arms, on observing the accident, and quietly crossed the stream. The water

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help hearing, I learned that they had just made a settlement, securing to me the brilliant fortune that had been offered me in the morning. I had the bad taste not to express my gratitude to the chevalier, simply and naturally. His generosity troubled me; I could not understand it, and I was still half suspicious that its real object was to separate me from my cousin. I did not appreciate the advantages of a fortune. The wants engendered by civilization were unknown to me; and, as far as I was concerned, aristocratic prejudices were merely a point of honor, and not at all a social vanity. As my uncle did not speak to me openly, I played the ungracious part of feigning to be completely ignorant of what he had done.

Edmée's sadness constantly increased. I noticed that she looked alternately at M. de la Marche and at me with a vague anxiety. Every time that I spoke to her, and even when I raised my voice in speaking to the others, she trembled, and then frowned slightly, as if my voice caused her some physical pain. She withdrew immediately after dinner, and her father followed her, with evident anxiety.

"Have you not noticed," said the abbé to M. de la Marche, as they left the room, "that Mademoiselle de Mauprat has been very much changed for some time?"

"She has grown thin," answered the lieutenant-general; "but it seems to me that she is only the more beautiful."

"Yes, but I fear she is more ill than she acknowledges. Her character has changed as well as her face; she is sad."

"Sad? Why, I never saw her gayer than she was this morning; was it not so, M. Bernard? It is only since our walk that she has complained of a little headache."

"I tell you she is sad," returned the abbé. "Her gayety now, when she is gay, is excessive; there is something strange and forced in it, that is quite different from her usual manner; and then, after a few moments, she relapses into a melancholy that I never remember to

have noticed before the notable night of the forest. Rest assured that the emotions of that night were terrible."

"She witnessed, in fact, a frightful scene at Gazeau Tower," said M. de la Marche; "and then that mad ride through the forest, when her horse ran away with her, must have fatigued and terrified her greatly. But yet she has such wonderful courage! Tell me, dear Monsieur Bernard, when you met her in the forest did she seem to you very much fatigued?"

"In the forest?" I replied. "I did not meet her in the forest."

"No, it was in Varenne that you met her. Apropos, Monsieur Bernard, will you allow me to say a word to you on business, in private, about your property de —"

He drew me from the drawing-room, and said, in a low voice, —

"It is not on business that I want to speak; I beseech you allow no one to suspect, not even M. de la Marche, that Mademoiselle de Mauprat was at la Roche Mauprat, even for a single second."

"And why not?" I answered. "Was she not there under my protection, and did she not leave it pure, thanks to me? Every one in the country must know that she was there for two hours."

"Not a human being knows it excepting ourselves," he replied. "At the moment of her escape, la Roche Mauprat fell under the assault of the besiegers, and none of the Mauprats will return from the bosom of the tomb, or from the depths of their exile, to relate that unfortunate fact. When you know more of the world, you will know how important it is for the reputation of a young lady that no danger — no! not even the shadow of danger — should be supposed to have threatened her honor. In the meanwhile, I implore you, for the sake of her father, in the name of the friendship that you feel for her, and which you expressed this morning in a manner so noble and touching! —"

"You are very adroit, Monsieur l'Abbé," I said, interrupting him; "all your words have a double meaning, which I understand perfectly well, rude and unculti-

vated as I am. Tell my cousin to be reassured. I have no reason to gainsay her virtue, most certainly; and I should be incapable, besides, of breaking off a marriage which she desires. Tell her I shall only claim one thing, — and that is the fulfilment of the promise of friendship which she made me at la Roche Mauprat."

"How very important you seem to think this promise!" said the abbé. "Have you any reason for believing that your cousin will not fulfil it?"

I looked him full in the face; he was evidently troubled, and, in the hope that he would repeat my words to Edmée, I took pleasure in tormenting him.

"None," I replied; "only I see you fear that M. de la Marche will abandon her in case the adventure of Roche Mauprat is discovered. If that gentleman is capable of suspecting Edmée, and of insulting her on the eve of their marriage, it seems to me that there is a very easy way of settling the affair."

"And what, in your opinion?"

"To challenge him, and kill him."

"I hope you will do everything in your power to save the excellent M. Hubert from such a cruel necessity and such a frightful danger."

"I will save him from both, by taking it upon myself to avenge my cousin. It is my right, Monsieur l'Abbé; I know the duties of a gentleman quite as well as if I had studied Latin. You can tell her so from me. Let her sleep in peace; I will be silent, and if that does not suffice I will fight."

"But, Bernard," replied the abbé, in a gentle and insinuating voice, "think of your cousin's affection for M. de la Marche."

"Ah, well, — a reason the more for my killing him," I cried, transported with rage.

And I turned my back upon him abruptly.

The abbé reported the whole of this conversation to his penitent. The part which the worthy priest was called upon to play was very embarrassing. He had received, under the seal of confession, a confidence to which he could only make indirect allusions in conversing with

. He hoped, however, by means of these delicate ısions, to make me understand how criminal my ob- ıacy was, and to induce me to renounce my claims ely and generously. He had formed too high an opin- of me; I had neither the strength to practise, nor the elligence to comprehend such virtue.

X.

FTER this scene, several days passed in an apparent calm. Edmée complained of being ill, and remained ıch of the time in her chamber. M. de la Marche, ose chateau was near Saint Sévère, called almost every y. My aversion for this young man constantly in- ased, in spite of the politeness with which he treated . I could not comprehend his philosophical affecta- ns, and I resisted his advances with all the rudeness l violence of which I was capable. There was only e thing that consoled me a little for my secret misery, l that was that he was not admitted, any more than self, to Edmée's private apartment.

The only event of the week was the establishment of tience in a little cottage near the chateau. Since the bé Aubert had found a refuge from ecclesiastical per- utions in the home of the chevalier, it had no longer en necessary for him to see his friend, the stoic, se- tly. He had begged him, therefore, to quit his rmitage, and take up his abode near him. Patience uired a great deal of urging. He had become so at- hed to Gazeau Tower during the many years that he l lived there in solitude, that he hesitated to give it up, en for the sake of his friend. Besides, he feared that abbé would be corrupted by his intercourse with the eat, that his former prejudices would regain their influ- ce over him, and that he would grow cold to the holy use. When Edmée became acquainted with Patience, e curé found her a powerful ally. She gained his art; and such was her grace and delicacy, that she suc- eded in offering him a little house belonging to her

father, situated in a picturesque ravine near the entrance of the park, without wounding his fastidious pride. It was to conclude this famous negotiation that the abbé had gone to Gazeau Tower with Marcasse, on the evening of the fall of la Roche Mauprat, when, detained by the storm, they had given asylum to Edmée and me. The frightful scene that followed our arrival put an end to the peasant's hesitation. Inclining, as he was, to the doctrines of Pythagoras, he had a horror of the shedding of blood. Like Shakespeare's Jacques, he wept over the death of a deer; and the murder of human beings it was impossible for him to contemplate. From the moment, therefore, that Gazeau Tower became the theatre of two tragic deaths, it seemed to him contaminated, and nothing would have induced him to remain there a night longer. He followed us to Saint Sévère, and soon allowed his philosophical scruples to be vanquished by Edmée's influence. The little house that he was persuaded to occupy was so humble, that he did not have to blush in accepting it, as he would have done had he made a more direct compromise with civilization. His solitude was less profound than at Gazeau Tower, but the frequent visits of the abbé, and those of Edmée, left him no right to complain.

(Here the narrator once more interrupted his story to enter into the development of Mademoiselle de Mauprat's character.)

Edmée (he said), in the bosom of her modest retirement, — and rest assured that I am not speaking thus out of partiality, — was one of the most perfect women in France. She would have been praised and admired above all others if desire or necessity had made her known to the world. But she was happy in her family, and her high faculties and lofty virtues were crowned by the sweetest simplicity. She was ignorant of her merit, as I was ignorant of myself at this period, when, brute that I was, I saw only with the eyes of the body, and imagined that I loved her only because she was beautiful. I must state, also, that her fiancé, M. de la Marche, understood her scarcely any better than I did. He had developed his

feeble intelligence in the cold school of Voltaire and Helvetius. She had illumined her vast intellect with the burning declamations of Jean Jacques. A time came when I comprehended Edmée; M. de la Marche always remained as incapable of doing so, as we both were at this time.

Deprived of her mother in infancy, and left to follow her youthful inspirations by a father full of confidence, goodness, and tenderness, Edmée may be said to have formed her own character. The abbé Aubert, who administered her first communion, had not forbidden her to read the philosophers by whom he himself had been fascinated. Meeting with no opposition, or even discussion, for she was her father's idol, and governed him in all things, Edmée had remained faithful to two principles, apparently diametrically opposed: the philosophy which was preparing the ruin of Christianity, and Christianity, which proscribed the spirit of investigation. To explain this contradiction, you must recall what I have already told you of the effect produced upon the abbé Aubert by the *Profession de foi du Vicaire Savoyard.* You cannot be ignorant, besides, that mysticism and doubt reign together in poetic souls. Jean Jacques was a startling and brilliant example of this anomaly, and you know the sympathy which he called out among priests and noblemen, even when he was rebuking them with so much vehemence. Conviction, aided by a sublime eloquence, what miracles can it not perform! Edmée had drank at this living spring with all the eagerness of an ardent soul. In her rare journeys to Paris she had sought out minds sympathetic with her own. There, however, she had found so many shades of opinion, so little harmony, and above all, although philosophy was the fashion of the day, so many insurmountable prejudices, that she had attached herself with renewed love to her solitude, and her poetic reveries under the old oaks of her ancestral park. She already spoke of her illusions, and with a good sense superior to her age, and perhaps to her sex, refused every opportunity of entering into direct communication with the philosophers whose writings made her intellectual life.

"I am a little of a sybarite," she said, smiling; "I prefer to smell a bouquet of roses arranged for me in the morning in a vase, to gathering them myself, in spite of their thorns, and under a burning sun."

When she called herself a sybarite, she spoke figuratively. Brought up in the country, she was strong, active, courageous, joyous: to all the graces of the most delicate beauty she united the energy of physical and moral health. She was a proud and intrepid young girl, as well as a sweet and affable chatelaine. I often found her haughty and disdainful; Patience, and the poor of the country, always found her humble and compliant.

Edmée loved the poets almost as well as her spiritual philosophers; she always walked with a book in her hand. One day, when she was reading Tasso, she met Patience, who, as usual, inquired curiously about the author and his subject. Edmée had to give him an account of the crusades; but this was not her hardest task. Thanks to the teachings of the abbé, and to his prodigious memory for facts, Patience was tolerably familiar with the outlines of universal history. What he had most trouble in understanding, was the connection and distinction between epic poetry and history. At first he was indignant with the fictions of the poets; such frauds, he thought, should never have been allowed. Then, when he comprehended that epic poetry, far from misleading mankind, embodied heroic facts in grander proportions, and gave them an immortality of glory, he asked why all important events had not been sung by the bards, and why the history of humanity had not been thrown into a popular form, which, without the aid of letters, could be impressed upon the memory. He asked Edmée to explain to him a stanza of *la Jerusalem*; he took a fancy to it, and she read him a canto in French verse. Several days later she read him a second canto, and soon Patience knew the whole poem. He was delighted to learn that this heroic narrative was popular in Italy, and, in summing up his recollections, he tried to give them an abridged form in rude prose, but he had no memory for words. Agitated by his vivid impressions, a thousand sublime images passed before his eyes. He

expressed them in improvisations, in which his genius triumphed over the barbarism of his language, but it was impossible for him to recall what he said. Some one would have had to write under his dictation to give his inspirations permanent form, and, after all, they would have been useless to him; for, assuming that he could have succeeded in reading them, his memory had been so exclusively exercised upon ideas, that he could not retain the precise words of the briefest fragment. He improvised a great deal, and his language was often biblical in grandeur and simplicity; but, excepting certain expressions that he specially admired, and a number of short sentences that he had managed to appropriate, he remembered nothing of the pages that had so often been read to him, and to which he always listened with as much emotion as on hearing them for the first time. The effect produced by poetry upon this powerful organization is indescribable. Little by little the abbé, Edmée, and I (after a time I joined them in their task) succeeded in familiarizing him with Homer and Dante. He was so struck by the Divine Comedy that he could analyze the whole of that sublime poem from beginning to end, without forgetting or transposing any part of the journey, the encounters, or the emotions of the poet; but this was all that he could do. When he attempted to repeat any of the expressions that had charmed him in hearing the poem read, a torrent of metaphors and images rushed from his lips, jumbled together like the ravings of delirium. This initiation of Patience into poetry marked an epoch in his life; it gave him in dreams the heroic activity which was wanting in his real existence. In the magic mirror of poetry he beheld terrific combats, he saw heroes ten feet high; he comprehended love, which he had never known; he fought, he loved, he conquered, he enlightened peoples, he pacified the world, he redressed the wrongs of the human race, and built temples to the great spirit of the universe. He saw in the starry sphere all the gods of Olympus, fathers of a primitive humanity; he read in the constellations the history of the age of gold, and that of the ages of silver and of brass; he

us. Like him, I had been uncultivated, and had sought in the outer world the explanation of my being, as one seeks the solution of an enigma. Thanks to the fortuitous circumstances of my birth and wealth, I succeeded in attaining a complete development, while Patience struggled to his death in the darkness of an ignorance from which he neither would nor could emerge. But this was only another proof of the superiority of his powerful organization, since he advanced with bolder strides in an intellectual life, assisted only by the feeble glimmering of instinct, than I did illumined by all the torches of science; and since, moreover, he had not a single evil propensity to conquer, while I had them all.

But, at the time to which I am now referring, Patience, in my eyes, was merely a grotesque personage, who served as an object of amusement for Edmée, and of charitable compassion for the abbé Aubert. When they spoke to me of him seriously, I no longer comprehended them, and I imagined that they chose this subject of conversation as a sort of parabolical text, to demonstrate to me the advantages of education, the necessity of early application, and the useless regrets of old age.

In spite of these sentiments, I passed a great deal of my time in prowling about the wood that surrounded his new dwelling; for I had seen Edmée crossing the park to visit him, and I hoped to surprise her, and obtain an interview, as she returned. But she was always accompanied by the abbé, and sometimes even by her father; and, if she remained alone with the old peasant, he invariably escorted her to the chateau. Concealed in the branches of a monstrous yew-tree, which extended its numerous shoots and pendant branches to within a few steps of the cottage, I often watched Edmée as she sat upon its threshold. She always had a book in her hand, from which she read to Patience, who listened to her with his arms crossed, his head bent upon his breast, and his whole person indicating his profound attention. I imagined that she was trying to teach him to read, and thought her foolish to attempt an impossible task. But how beautiful she looked in the light of the setting sun,

seated under the yellow vines climbing over the cottage! I gazed upon her with delight, saying that she belonged to me, and swearing to myself that neither force nor persuasion should ever induce me to give her up.

For several days my sufferings had been almost more than I could bear; I could get no relief, excepting by drinking a great deal of wine at supper. In this way I succeeded in stupefying myself a little, so that I suffered less at the hour, — an hour for me how sad and how humiliating! — when Edmée, after embracing her father, allowing M. de la Marche to kiss her hand, and saying, as she passed before me, "Good-night, Bernard!" in a tone that seemed to say, "To-day has finished like yesterday, and to-morrow will finish like to-day," left the drawing-room.

In vain did I seat myself in an arm-chair near the door, so that she could not go out without brushing against me with her dress. I never obtained anything more, and I did not offer to shake hands with her; for if she had given me her hand with indifference, I believe that I should have crushed it, in my anger.

Thanks to my large libations at supper, I succeeded in getting drunk silently and sadly. I threw myself immediately into my favorite arm-chair, and remained there, gloomy and drowsy, until the fumes of the wine were dissipated, when I went to air my mad dreams and sinister designs in the park.

No one seemed to notice this gross habit. I was treated with so much indulgence and goodness in this family, that they feared to blame me for the most glaring offences. Both the chevalier and the curé, however, had remarked my shameful passion for wine; and the curé informed Edmée of it. One evening, at supper, she looked at me indignantly several times. I stared at her in my turn, hoping that she would speak and provoke me; but the duel between us ended with an exchange of angry glances. As we left the table, she said to me in a low voice, very quickly, and in an imperious tone, —

"Stop drinking, and learn all that the abbé wishes to teach you."

"Why are you weeping thus, Bernard?"

I yielded to this gentle violence, half ashamed to have allowed the secret of my weakness to be surprised, and half enraptured to see that Edmée was not indifferent to my misery.

"What grief can you have," she continued, "that can draw from your breast such sobs?"

"You hate me, you despise me, and you ask why I suffer, — why I am angry?"

"It is anger, then, that makes you weep!" she said, withdrawing her arm.

"Anger, and something else besides," I answered.

"What besides?" said Edmée.

"I do not know, — grief, perhaps, as you say. The fact is that I suffer; there seems a weight upon my breast that is crushing me. I must leave you, Edmée, and go and live in the woods. I cannot stay here."

"Why do you suffer so much? Explain yourself, Bernard; this is a good opportunity for an explanation."

"Yes, with a wall between us. I can understand very well that you are not afraid of me here."

"And yet I show an interest in you, it seems to me; and at one time I was as affectionate to you when there was no wall between us; is it not so, Bernard?"

"No wonder that you are not timid, Edmée; you have good cause to be brave, for you always have some way of avoiding people, or of entrapping them with your sweet words. Ah! they told me truly that all women were deceitful, and that I must not love any of them."

"Who told you that? your uncle Jean, or your uncle Gaucher, or your grandfather Tristan?"

"Ah, yes, — mock me, mock me as much as you please. It was not my fault that I was brought up by them. Besides, they may sometimes have said what was true."

"Bernard, shall I tell you why they believed women to be deceitful?"

"Say!"

"It is because they employed violence and tyranny with beings weaker than themselves. Those who make

themselves feared, always run the risk of being deceived. In your childhood, when Jean used to beat you, have you never concealed your little faults to avoid his brutal abuse?"

"It is true; it was my only resource."

"Cunning, then, if not the right, is the only resource of the oppressed. Do you not feel this?"

"I feel that I love you, and that you cannot find any excuse in that for deceiving me."

"Who says that I have deceived you?"

"You have; you said that you loved me, — you do not love me."

"I loved you because I saw you struggling between detestable principles and the good impulses of a generous heart, and inclining, in that struggle, to justice and honesty. And I still love you when I see you conquer your bad principles, and when your wicked inspirations are followed by tears of shame. This I can say to you, before God, and with my hand on my conscience, when I see you as you really are. There are other moments when you seem to me so below yourself that I no longer recognize you, and when I feel that I do not love you. It depends upon you, Bernard, to make me cease to doubt you or myself."

"But what must I do?"

"Correct your bad habits. Open your ears to good advice, and your heart to the precepts of morality. You are a savage, Bernard; and be very sure that it is neither your awkwardness in making a bow, nor your ignorance of how to turn a compliment, by which I am shocked. On the contrary, your roughness would be a great charm in my eyes, if it concealed great ideas and noble sentiments; but your sentiments and ideas are like your manners, and that I cannot endure. I know this is not your fault; and if I saw you resolved to improve, I would love you for your faults no less than for your good qualities. Compassion gives birth to affection. But I do not love evil, — I cannot love it, — and if you cultivate it in yourself, instead of eradicating it, I cannot love you. Do you understand that?"

"If we should ever be married," she said with embarrassment, "when you have received the education which I implore you to receive —"

"'Sdeath! You are mocking me! Is it a question of marriage between us? Not at all! I do not want your fortune, — I told you so."

"My fortune and yours will be one," she answered. "Between relatives so near as we are, yours and mine are words without meaning. Never did it occur to me to believe you avaricious. I know that you love me, that you will labor to prove this to me, and that the day will come when your love will no longer terrify me, since I shall be able to accept it in the face of heaven and of men."

"If that is your idea," I replied, quite distracted from my savage transports by the new direction that she had given to my thoughts, "my position is very different; but, to tell you the truth, I must reflect on what you say. I never dreamed that you understood your promise so —"

"And how else could I have understood it?" she replied. "Does not a woman dishonor herself by loving any man excepting her husband? I do not wish to be dishonored, nor can you wish it any more than I, you who love me. Surely you do not want to do me an irreparable injury. If this were your intention, you would be my most mortal enemy."

"Wait, Edmée, wait!" I replied. "I cannot tell you anything about my intentions, for I have never had any in regard to you. I have only had desires, and I have never thought of you without becoming mad. You want me to marry you? And why then, my God?"

"Because a young girl who respects herself cannot give her love, without the thought, without the resolution, without the certainty of belonging to the man whom she loves always. Do you not know that?"

"There are so many things that I do not know, or of which I have never thought."

"Education will teach you, Bernard, what you should think upon the subjects in which you are most interested: your position, your duties, and your sentiments. You do not see clearly, either in your heart or in your con-

science. I am accustomed to question all my thoughts, and to govern myself; how do you suppose that I can take for my master a man guided by instinct and governed by chance?"

"Master! Husband! No, I comprehend that you cannot submit your whole life to an animal like me. But I do not ask such a sacrifice! And I cannot think of it without trembling."

"And yet you must think of it, Bernard: think much of it; and, when you have done so, you will feel the necessity of following my advice, and of bringing your mind into harmony with the new position into which you entered on leaving la Roche Mauprat. When you have recognized this necessity, tell me so, and we will then take several necessary resolutions."

She withdrew her hand gently from mine, and I believe bade me good-evening, but I did not hear her. I remained absorbed in thought; and when I lifted my head to speak, she was no longer there. I went into the chapel, but she had returned to her chamber by an upper gallery that communicated with her apartment.

I returned to the garden, rushed into the park, and remained there all night. My conversation with Edmée had introduced me into a new world. Hitherto I had not ceased to be the savage of la Roche Mauprat; I had not even comprehended that I could or ought to transform myself into a new being; my habits had changed with circumstances, but the narrow circle of my thoughts had remained unaltered. Surrounded by new influences, and mortified by their power, I resisted them with all my force, in order that I might not feel a sense of humiliation; and when I consider my perseverance, and the strength of my will, I believe that nothing in the world could have conquered my obstinacy, if Edmée had not interfered to save me. The vulgar blessings of life, the satisfactions of luxury, charmed me only from their novelty. Physical repose wearied me; and the tranquillity of my uncle's house, dedicated to silence and order, would have stifled me, if Edmée's presence, and the storm of my desires, had not filled it with agitations, and peopled it with phan-

toms. Never, for a single moment, had I desired to become the head of this house, or the master of my cousin's fortune; and it had afforded me sincere pleasure to hear Edmée do justice to my disinterestedness. In spite of her persuasions, I still shrank from the idea of associating my passion and my interests; so irreconcilable did these two ends appear to me. I wandered through the park perplexed by a thousand anxieties, and gained the open country without noticing it.

The full moon poured floods of her serene light over the unsown fields, parched by the heat of day. The withered plants lifted their drooping heads, — each leaf seemed to breathe through all its pores the humid freshness of the night. I also felt this sweet influence. My heart beat with force, but with regularity. I was inundated by a vague hope; the image of Edmée floated before me over the paths of the meadows, and no longer excited those sorrowful ecstacies, those frenzied aspirations, that had so long devoured me.

I was crossing an open plain, where groves of young trees interrupted here and there the green sweep of the pasture-grounds. Enormous light-hued oxen knelt on the short turf, motionless, seeming plunged in peaceful contemplations. Sloping hills arose towards the horizon, and their tufted brows seemed quivering in the pure reflections of the moon. For the first time in my life I felt the voluptuous beauty and the sublime emanations of the night. I felt myself penetrated by some mysterious and beneficent influence. It seemed to me that I was beholding the moon, the hills, and the meadows for the first time. I remembered having heard Edmée say that there was no more beautiful spectacle than that of nature; and I was astonished that I should never have perceived this before. I thought, at moments, of falling upon my knees, and praying to God; but I feared that I would not know how to speak to Him, and would offend Him by praying badly. Shall I confess to you a singular fantasy that came to me, like a childish revelation of poetic love, in the bosom of the chaos of my ignorance?

The moon illumined every object so fully, that I could

distinguish the smallest flowers in the turf. A little meadow daisy seemed to me so beautiful, with its white collar fringed with purple, and its golden calyx full of the diamonds of the dew, that I gathered it, and covered it with kisses, while I cried, in a sort of delicious frenzy,—

"It is you, Edmée! yes, it is you! You are here! you will no longer fly me!"

But what was my confusion, on rising to my feet, to see that my folly had had a witness! Patience was standing before me.

I was so displeased to have been surprised in such an excess of extravagance, that, with the natural movement of the Coupe-Jarret, I sought my knife in my belt; but I had no longer either belt or knife. My silk waistcoat, with pockets, reminded me that I was condemned to cut no more throats. Patience smiled.

"Ah, well! ah, well! what is the matter?" the Solitary said, calmly and sweetly. "Do you think I do not know what you feel? I am not so simple that I cannot comprehend; I am not so old that I cannot see clearly. Who is it who stirs the branches of my yew-tree, whenever the holy maiden is seated at my door? Who is it who follows us under the thicket, with cautious steps, like a young wolf, when I reconduct the beautiful child to her father's house? And what harm in all that? You are both young, you are both beautiful, you are relations; and, if you choose, you can become a worthy and honest man, as she is a worthy and honest girl."

All my anger disappeared as soon as Patience began to speak of Edmée. I had such an intense longing to talk of her, that I would have endured any suffering solely for the pleasure of hearing her name pronounced. I continued my walk side by side with Patience. The old man was walking barefooted in the dew. He had not worn shoes for many years, and his feet had become so callous that they needed no protection. His clothes consisted merely of a pair of blue linen pantaloons, — which, as he did not wear suspenders, were constantly slipping over his thighs, — and a coarse shirt. He could not bear the restraint of clothes; and his skin, hardened by the

weather, was sensible neither to the heat nor cold. Until he was more than eighty years old he walked bare-headed in the most burning sun, and with open vest in the winter wind. Since Edmée had taken him under her charge, he had maintained a sort of cleanliness; but in the disorder of his toilette, and his hatred of superfluities (in this category he included whatever was more than necessary to shield him from indecency, which had always been odious to him), the cynic of former days could still be recognized. His beard shone like silver; his bald head was so polished that the moon was reflected in it as in water. He walked slowly, with his hands behind his back, and head raised, like a man who surveys his empire. But more often his eyes were fastened upon the heavens; and he interrupted his discourse to say, as he pointed to the starry vault, —

"See there; see how beautiful it is!"

This was the only peasant whom I have ever seen admire the heavens; or the only one, at least, whom I have ever seen render an account to himself of his admiration.

"Why, Master Patience," I said, "do you say that I can become an honest man if I choose? Do you not think that I am honest now?"

"Oh, do not be angry," he answered; "Patience has the right to say anything. Is he not the fool of the chateau?"

"Edmée says, on the contrary, that you are its sage."

"Does she say that, the holy child of God! Ah well! if she thinks so, I will act like a sage, and will give you good advice, Master Bernard Mauprat. Will you hear it?"

"It seems that every one here undertakes to advise me. No matter, I listen."

"You are in love with your cousin?"

"You are very bold to ask such a question."

"I do not ask a question; I state a fact. Ah, well! I tell you, for my part, win your cousin's love, and become her husband."

"And why do you feel such an interest in me, Master Patience?"

"Because you deserve it."

"Who has told you so, — the abbé?"

"Not he."

"Edmée?"

"Perhaps. And yet she is not much in love with you, — now, at least; but it is your own fault."

"How so, Patience?"

"Because she wants you to become learned; and you — you will not. Ah! if I was of your age, — I, the poor Patience, — and if, without stifling, I could keep myself shut up in a room only two hours a day, and if all those whom I met were eager to teach me; if they said to me, 'Patience, behold what was done yesterday, — Patience, behold what will be done to-morrow!' But enough! enough! I must find out everything for myself; and the way is so long that I shall die of old age before learning the tenth part of what I should like to know. But listen! I have still another reason for wishing you to marry Edmée."

"What, good Monsieur Patience?"

"Because that La Marche does not suit her. I have told her so, — yes, indeed! — and I have told him so as well, and the abbé, and every one! He is not a man, that fellow. He smells as sweet as a whole garden; but I prefer the smallest sprig of wild thyme."

"Zounds! I like him no better than you do, myself. But if my cousin loves him — hey, Patience?"

"Your cousin does not love him. She thinks him good, she thinks him genuine; but she is deceived. He deceives her, and deceives everybody. I know what he is; he is a man who has nothing here" (and Patience placed his hand upon his heart). "He is a man who is always saying, 'In me the virtuous, the unfortunate, the wise, the friends of the human race have a protector and a friend; let them come to me, etc., etc.' Ah, well! I, Patience, know that he lets poor people die of hunger at the door of his chateau. I know that if some one should say to him, 'Give up your chateau, eat black bread, give up your estates, become a soldier, and there will be no more unfortunates in the world, the human race, as you

call it, will be saved,' that man would say, 'No, I thank you; I am seigneur of my estates, and I am not weary of my chateau.' Oh! I know them well, these false philanthropists. How different from Edmée! You do not understand that! You love her because she is beautiful as the meadow daisy; but I, — I love her because she is good as the moon, that illumines the whole world. Ah, that is a girl with a noble heart! She gives all that she has, and does not wear a jewel, because on the value of a ring a man can be supported for a whole year. Does she meet on her road a little child with a wounded foot, she takes off her own shoe to give him, and goes barefooted. And then her heart is upright, you see. If, to-morrow, the villagers of Saint Sévère should go to her in a body, and say, 'Young lady, you have been rich long enough; give us what you have, and work in your turn,' — 'That is just, my good children,' she would say; and she would go gayly and lead the flocks to the fields! Her mother was like her; for, you see, I knew her mother when she was very young, as Edmée is now, and yours also, — yes, indeed! Ah! she was a notable woman, — charitable, just. And you take after her, according to what they say."

"Alas, no!" I answered, deeply moved by the words of Patience. "I know neither charity nor justice."

"You have not been able to practise them as yet, but they are written in your heart; I know it, for my part. They call me a sorcerer, and I am so in a way. I know a man right off. Do you remember what you said to me one day on the green sward of Valide? You were with Sylvain, and I was with Marcasse. You said that an honest man would revenge his own quarrels. And apropos, Monsieur Mauprat, if you are not content with the excuses that I made you at Gazeau Tower, you must say so. See, there is nobody here, and, old as I am, my fist is still as good as yours; we can strike some good blows, — it is the right of nature; and although I do not approve of violence, I never refuse to give reparation to whoever demands it. I know there are some men who would die of grief if they could not be revenged, and I who speak to you have re-

quired more than fifty years to forget an affront that I received once; and when I think of it, even now, my hatred of the nobles revives, and it seems to me that I have committed a crime in having been able to pardon some few of them in my heart."

"I am fully satisfied, master Patience; so far from wishing to be revenged, I feel a friendship for you."

"Ah! That is because I scratch your itching eye! How good the young are! Come, Mauprat, take courage! Follow the councils of the abbé, — he is a just man. Try to please your cousin, — she is a star of the firmament. Know the truth, love the people; detest those who detest them; be ready to sacrifice yourself for them. Listen, listen! I know what I say, — become the friend of the people."

"Are the people, then, better than the nobility, Patience? In good faith, since you are a sage, tell me the truth."

"The people are worth more than the nobility, because the nobility crush them, and because they suffer. But they will not suffer always, perhaps. The time may come, you may as well know it; — hold! Do you see yonder stars? They will not change, they will be in the same place, and will shed the same light upon the earth ten thousand years hence that they do now; but before a hundred years, — in less time, perhaps, — there will be many changes on the earth. Believe a man who listens to the truth, and who does not suffer himself to be misled by the grand airs of the strong. The poor have suffered enough; they will turn upon the rich, chateaux will fall, and estates will be divided. I shall not live to see this, but you will see it. There will be ten cottages in the place of this park, and ten families will live upon its revenue. There will be no longer either valets, or masters, or peasants, or seigneurs. There will be noblemen who will make a great outcry, and who will yield only to force, as your uncles would have done if they had lived, and as M. de la Marche will do, in spite of his fine speeches. There will be others who will yield generously, like Edmée, and like you, if you listen to

wisdom. And when that time comes, it will be well for Edmée that she should have a man for a husband, and not a fop. It will be well for Bernard Mauprat that he should know how to drive the plough, or kill the game of the good God, to nourish his family; for old Patience will be sleeping under the grass of the cemetery, and will not be able to render to Edmée the services that he has received. Do not laugh at what I say, young man; it is the voice of God that speaks to you through me. Behold the heavens! The stars move peacefully, and nothing deranges their eternal order. The great ones do not devour the small, and none of them rush upon their neighbors. Behold! The time will come when the same order will reign among men. The wicked will be swept away by the wind of the Lord. Plant your legs firmly, Seigneur de Mauprat, so that you may remain standing, and may be able to uphold Edmée. It is Patience who warns you, Patience who wishes you nothing but good. There will be others who will wish you evil, and the good must make themselves strong."

We had reached the peasant's cottage. He had paused at the gate of his little enclosure, and, leaning one hand upon the bars, gesticulated with the other. He spoke with energy, his eyes shot forth ardent flames, his forehead was bathed with sweat. There was something powerful in his speech, as in the words of the old prophets and the more than plebeian simplicity of his accoutrements added to the effect of his lofty gestures and penetrating voice. The French Revolution has taught the world that the orators of the people possessed a fiery eloquence and an implacable logic; but what I saw at that moment was so new to me, and made such an impression upon me, that my wild and unbridled imagination was carried away by the superstitious terrors of childhood. He held out his hand to me, and I responded to this appeal with more terror than sympathy. The sorcerer of Gazeau Tower, hanging over my head the bleeding owl, passed once more before my eyes.

XI.

WHEN I awoke on the following morning, I still felt thoroughly exhausted, and the events of the previous night seemed to me a dream. I now thought that Edmée's promise to become my wife had been a mere trick, to delay my hopes indefinitely; and, when I remembered what an impression had been made upon me by the words of the sorcerer, I felt deeply humiliated. That impression, however, could not be effaced. The emotions of this day influenced me permanently; I was no longer the man that I had been on the previous evening, and was never again thoroughly re-transformed into the savage of la Roche Mauprat.

It was late; for not until morning had I made up for my sleepless hours. I had not yet risen, and already heard the hoofs of M. de la Marche's horse ringing on the pavements of the court. Every day he arrived at this hour, every day he saw Edmée as soon as I did; and this very day, when she had promised me her hand, he would see her first, and press his foolish kiss upon that hand which belonged to me. This thought aroused all my doubts. How could Edmée allow the attentions of this man, if she really meant to marry another? Perhaps she dared not dismiss him; perhaps it was my duty to do so. I did not know the customs of the world into which I had entered. Passion urged me to yield to my violent impulses, and its voice was loud and persuasive.

I dressed with the utmost haste, and entered the drawing-room pale and agitated; Edmée was also pale. The morning was cold and rainy, and a fire had been kindled in the vast chimney-place. Reclining in an arm-chair, she was warming her little feet, and seemed asleep. She had fallen into the nonchalant and lifeless attitude that belonged to the days of her illness. M. de la Marche was reading a paper at the other end of the room. When I saw that Edmée was more overcome than myself by

the emotions of our late interview, I no longer felt angry; going to her side, I sat down quietly, and gazed upon her with tenderness.

"Is that you, Bernard?" she said, without moving, and without opening her eyes.

Her elbows were resting upon the arms of her easy-chair, and her hands, gracefully intertwined, supported her chin. The women of that period wore their arms partially bare, at all times and seasons. I noticed on Edmée's arm a little band of English ribbon, that made my heart beat. It covered the slight wound that I had given her on the sash of the chapel window. I gently lifted the lace that fell over her elbow, and, emboldened by her half slumber, pressed my lips to this dear wound. M. de la Marche might have seen me, and he really did see me, as I designed him to do. I was burning to have a quarrel with him. Edmée started and blushed; but recovering herself immediately, she said, in a lazily playful manner,—

"Really, Bernard, you are as gallant this morning as a court abbé! Did you not compose a madrigal last night?"

I was deeply mortified at this raillery, but I returned it boldly.

"Yes, I made one yesterday evening, at the window of the chapel," I answered; "and if it is a bad one, cousin, it is your fault."

"Say rather that it is the fault of your education," she replied, with renewed animation.

And never was she more beautiful than when expressing her pride and natural vivacity.

"My opinion is that I have a great deal too much education already," I answered; "if I listened more to my natural good sense, you would not ridicule me as you do."

"It seems to me, in truth, that you are having a trial of wit with Bernard this morning," said M. de la Marche, folding his paper carelessly, and approaching us.

"I release her," I replied, wounded by the impertinence of his manner. "Let her keep her wit for such as you."

I arose to affront him, but he did not seem to notice it; leaning against the mantle-piece with perfect coolness, he said to Edmée, in a gentle and almost an affectionate voice, just as if he had been asking about the health of her little dog, —

"What is the matter with him?"

"Who knows?" she answered, in the same tone. Then she arose, adding, "My headache is so bad that I cannot stay here. Give me your arm, and I will go to my room."

She went out, leaning upon his arm; I remained stupefied.

I waited, resolved to insult him as soon as he returned to the drawing-room, but the abbé entered first, and was soon followed by my uncle Hubert. They began to talk upon subjects of which I was utterly ignorant (this was the case with almost all subjects of conversation), and I had to remain silent. I longed to be revenged; but I dared not betray myself in my uncle's presence. I felt what was due to my respect for him and to the rights of hospitality. Never had I done myself such violence at la Roche Mauprat. Passion, anger, demand spontaneous manifestation; what agony did it not cost me to stifle my rage! Several times the chevalier, remarking my change of countenance, asked me whether I was ill. M. de la Marche did not seem to notice or suspect anything. The abbé alone observed me closely. I caught his blue eyes, whose natural penetration was always veiled by his habitual timidity, fastened anxiously upon me. The abbé did not love me. His manner was usually gentle and cheerful, but it became cold in spite of himself, as it were, when he spoke to me; and I had noticed, moreover, that his face always grew sad at my approach.

I was so little accustomed to restraining my feelings, and so incapable of making such an effort, that I felt ready to faint. Finally I went into the park, and threw myself upon the grass. This park was my refuge in all my troubles. These great oaks, this moss a century old, hanging from all their branches, these pale and odorous wild flowers, emblems of secret sorrows, had

been the friends of my childhood, — the only ones whom I had found unchanged in my social, as in my savage life. I hid my face in my hands, and I cannot remember ever having suffered more in any of the calamities of my life; and yet, in after years, I met with heavy trials, and, in fact, I ought to have esteemed myself happy at this period; I, who had abandoned the rude and perilous trade of the Coupe-Jarret, only to find myself surrounded by so many unexpected blessings,—affection, solicitude, wealth, liberty, instruction, good advice and good examples. But it is certain, in order to pass from one state of the soul to its opposite state, even from evil to good, from grief to enjoyment, and from fatigue to repose, that a man must suffer; in this birth of his new destiny, all the springs of his being are strained even to breaking. Thus, at the approach of summer, the sky is covered with heavy clouds, and the shuddering earth seems ready to be annihilated under the blows of the tempest.

I thought of nothing at this moment but of seeking some means of satisfying my hatred of M. de la Marche, without betraying the mysterious tie that bound me to Edmée, and without even letting it be suspected.

Nothing had been less observed at la Roche Mauprat than the sanctity of an oath; but the ballads of chivalry, which, as I have told you, were my only reading, had inspired me, in spite of my surroundings, with a romantic love of keeping faith, — about the only virtue that I could have acquired in that den. My promise to Edmée, therefore, restrained me invincibly.

"How shall I find," I said to myself, "some plausible pretext for throwing myself upon my enemy and strangling him?"

To tell the truth, this was not easy with a man who seemed to have made up his mind to treat me with politeness and kindness.

Absorbed and perplexed, I forgot the dinner-hour; and, when the sun began to sink behind the towers of the chateau, I remembered too late that my absence must have been remarked, and that I could not rejoin the family without submitting to Edmée's sharp questions, or

meeting the clear and cold glance of the abbé; that glance which always seemed to avoid mine, and which I would suddenly surprise searching the very depths of my soul.

I resolved not to enter the house until night, and, stretching myself upon the grass, I tried to sleep so as to rest my aching head. In fact I really fell asleep. When I awoke, the moon was rising, still red with the glory of sunset. The noise that had aroused me was very slight, but there are sounds that thrill the heart before striking the ear, and the most subtle emanations of love sometimes penetrate the rudest organizations. The voice of Edmée had just pronounced my name at a short distance from me, behind the thick foliage. At first I thought that I was dreaming; I remained motionless, I held my breath, and listened. It was she; accompanied by the abbé, she was on her way to visit the Solitary. They had stopped in a shady path a few steps from me, and were talking in whispers, but with that distinct utterance which arrests the attention and gives so much solemnity to confidential disclosures.

"I fear," said Edmée, "that he will make a scandal with M. de la Marche, or attempt something still more serious — who knows? You do not know Bernard."

"He must be removed from here at all hazards," answered the abbé. "You cannot live in this way, continually exposed to the brutality of a brigand."

"It is certain that it is not living. Since he entered this house I have not had a moment's liberty. Prisoner in my chamber, or forced to seek the protection of my friends, I dare not take a step. It is much if I can go down stairs; and I do not cross the hall without sending Leblanc to reconnoitre. The poor girl, who has seen me so brave, thinks me crazy. I no longer sleep without bolting my doors; and see, abbé, I carry a poignard with me,— neither more nor less than the heroine of a Spanish ballad."

"And if this wretch meets and terrifies you, you will plunge it into your heart; is it not so? You must not run such risks. Edmée, you must find some means of escaping from a position which is not tenable. I under

stand that you do not wish to deprive this brigand of your father's friendship, by confessing the monstrous bargain that you were forced to make with him at la Roche Mauprat. But, whatever may happen — Ah! my dear Edmée, I am not a fighting man, but twenty times a day I deplore that my character of priest prevents me from challenging this man, and ridding you of him forever."

This charitable regret, expressed so naively in my very ear, gave me a violent itching to show myself abruptly, if it were only to put the warrior mood of the good priest to the proof; but I was checked by my desire to learn at last Edmée's true sentiments and designs.

"Be tranquil," she said, carelessly; "if he wears out my patience I shall not hesitate at all to give him a cut in the cheek with this knife. I am very sure that a little bleeding will calm his ardor."

They approached a few steps nearer.

"Listen to me, Edmée," said the abbé, again pausing, "we cannot speak upon this subject before Patience; do not let us break off our conversation without coming to some conclusion. You are approaching an imminent crisis with Bernard. It seems to me, my child, that you are not doing all that you might to prevent misfortunes which may assail us; for a blow fatal to you will be so to us all, — will strike us all to the very heart."

"I hear you, my excellent friend," answered Edmée; "scold me, advise me."

While speaking she leaned against the tree, at the foot of which, concealed by bushes and tall herbs, I was lying. I believe that she might have seen me, for I saw her distinctly; but she was far from suspecting that I was gazing upon her celestial face, over which the breath of the evening wind wafted alternately the shadows of the agitated leaves, and the pale diamonds which the moon was sowing in the forest.

"I say, Edmée," replied the abbé, crossing his arms upon his breast, and from time to time striking his forehead, "that you do not judge your situation fairly. Sometimes it afflicts you to such a degree that you lose all hope, and wish to die (yes, my dear child. to such a

degree that your health has been visibly impaired by your distress), and sometimes, I must say so at the risk of offending you a little, you face your perils with a levity and gayety that surprises me."

"That last reproach is delicate, my friend," she answered; "but let me justify myself. Your astonishment comes from the fact that you do not well understand the Mauprat race. It is an ungovernable and incorrigible race, from which can only proceed Casse-Têtes or Coupe-Jarrets. Even those among us who have been most carefully polished by education retain many rude qualities,—a sovereign pride, a will of iron, a profound scorn of life. In spite of his adorable goodness, my father, as you know, is sometimes so excitable that he breaks his snuff-box in putting it on the table, when you get the better of him in your arguments upon politics, or beat him in chess. For my part, I feel that my veins are as large as if I had been born in the noble ranks of the people; and I do not believe that any Mauprat ever shone at court through the grace of his manners. How, then, would you wish me to care for life, being born brave? And yet, in moments of weakness, I pity myself for my hard fate, like a true woman as I am; but let me be offended, let me be threatened, and the blood of the strong race stirs in my veins, and then, as I have no power to crush my enemy, I cross my arms, and laugh with scorn to think that he should hope to make me fear. And take care, abbé, that you do not think all this exaggerated; for to-morrow, — this very evening, perhaps, — our worst fears may be realized; since this ivory knife, which does not look very dangerous, but which is good, as you see, was sharpened by don Marcasse (who is skilful in such matters), it has not left my side day or night, and I have formed my resolution. My hand is not very firm, but I could stab myself with this knife as easily as strike my horse with a whip. Ah, well! that blow given, my honor is safe. My life holds by a thread: a glass of wine, more or less, that M. Bernard may chance to drink one of these evenings, a chance meeting, a glance that he may imagine he has surprised between M. de la

Marche and myself,—nothing at all, perhaps! What can be done? If I lament, will that efface the past? We cannot tear out a single page from our life, but we can throw the whole book into the fire. Although I should weep from morning to night, will that change the fact that destiny, or a day of ill-humor, sent me to the hunt, — that it allowed me to get lost in the forest, and made me meet a Mauprat, who led me to his den, where I escaped insult, and perhaps death, only by linking my life forever with that of a savage child, incapable of comprehending my ideas, or of sharing my sympathies, and who, perhaps (and who without doubt, I should rather say), will always be so? I was in all the glory of a happy destiny, — the pride and joy of my old father, about to marry a man whom I esteem, and who had pleased me, no grief, no apprehension had crossed my path; I knew neither days without security, nor nights without sleep. Ah, well! God did not wish that such a beautiful life should be fulfilled; let His will be done. There are days when the loss of all my hopes seems to me so inevitable that I look upon myself as dead, and my fiancé as a widower. Were it not for my poor father, I should really laugh at the whole affair; for I can so ill endure vexation and fear, that they have already made me weary of life."

"This courage is heroic, but it is frightful!" cried the abbé, in an altered voice. "It is almost a determination to commit suicide, Edmée."

"Oh! I shall dispute my life," she answered, warmly; "but I shall not bargain with it an instant if my honor does not come safe and sound from all these perils. As to that, I am not pious enough to accept a sullied life, for the sake of doing penance for faults that I never had an idea of committing. If God is so severe with me that I have to choose between death and shame — "

"There can be no shame for you, Edmée, — a soul as chaste, an intention so pure — "

"Oh! no matter, dear abbé! I am not, perhaps, so virtuous as you think. I am not very orthodox in religion; neither are you, abbé — I care little for the world, I do not love it; I neither fear nor despise public

opinion, I shall never have anything to do with it. I know not what principle of virtue would be strong enough to hinder me from yielding, if a spirit of evil should take possession of me. I have read *la Nouvelle Heloise*, and I wept over it abundantly; but because I am a Mauprat and am endowed with inflexible pride, I would never submit to the tyranny of a man, and no more to the violence of a lover than to the blow of a husband. It belongs only to a base soul and cowardly character to yield to force what is denied to entreaty. Saint Solange, the beautiful shepherdess, had her head cut off, rather than submit to the *droit du seigneur*. And you know that, from mother to daughter, the Mauprats have been baptized under the auspices of the patroness of Berry."

"Yes, I know that you are strong and brave," said the abbé; "and because I esteem you more than any woman in the world, I wish you to live, I wish you to be free, and to form a marriage worthy of you, so that you may fulfil, in the human family, the part which still further ennobles the most elevated souls. Besides, you are necessary to your father; healthy and robust as Mauprat still is, your death would precipitate him into the tomb. Chase, then, these gloomy thoughts, and these extreme resolutions, from your mind. The adventure of la Roche Mauprat was nothing more than a troubled dream; it is impossible that it should be otherwise. We all had the nightmare on that terrible night, but it is time for us to awaken; we cannot remain in a stupor, like children. There is only one course for you to pursue, — that which I have already advised."

"On the contrary, abbé, that course I regard as the most impossible of all others. I have sworn by all that is most sacred in the universe and in the human heart."

"Human laws have decreed that an oath extorted by threats and violence is binding upon no one; divine laws also, especially in circumstances of this kind, absolve the conscience without hesitation. If you were orthodox, I would go to Rome, — I would go on foot, — and obtain your release from your rash vow; but you do not submit to the Pope, Edmée, — nor I either."

"So you wish me to be perjured?"

"Your soul would not be so."

"It would! I swore knowing well what I did, and when I might have killed myself upon the spot; for I had a knife in my hand three times as large as this one. I wanted to live — I wanted, above all things, to see my father once more, and embrace him. To put an end to the agony which I knew he must be suffering on account of my disappearance, I would have pledged more than my life, — my immortal soul. And since then, no later than yesterday evening, as I told you, I have renewed my engagement, and again freely; for there was a wall between my amiable fiancé and me."

"How could you have been so imprudent, Edmée Here, again, I no longer understand you."

"Oh! as to that, I believe you; for I no longer understand myself," said Edmée, in a strange voice.

"My dear child, you must speak to me frankly. I am the only person here who can advise you, since I am the only one to whom you can tell everything, under the seal of a friendship as sacred as that of the Catholic confessional can be. Answer me, then: You do not regard a marriage between you and Bernard Mauprat as possible?"

"How can that be impossible which is inevitable?" said Edmée. "There is nothing more possible than to throw yourself into the river, nothing more possible than to dedicate yourself to misfortune and despair, and nothing more possible, consequently, than to marry Bernard Mauprat."

"At any rate, I will not give my blessing to a union so absurd and deplorable," cried the abbé. "You the wife and slave of that Coupe-Jarret! Edmée, you said just now that you would no more submit to the violence of a lover than to the blow of a husband."

"You think that he will beat me?"

"If he does not kill you."

"Oh, no!" she answered, with a roguish air, as she lifted her knife in her hand, "I will kill him first. *A Mauprat, Mauprat et demie!*"

"You are laughing, Edmée! Oh, my God! you laugh at the thought of such a hymen! Even although this man may have some affection and regard for you, think of the impossibility of his understanding you, the grossness of his ideas, the vulgarity of his language. The heart sickens with disgust at the idea of such an association; and in what language will you speak to him — great God?"

A second time I came very near rising, and falling upon my panegyrist; but I conquered my anger. Edmée spoke, and once more I was all ears.

"I know very well that, at the end of three days, I should have nothing better to do than to cut my throat; but since, in one way or the other, it must come to that at last, why should I not go straight forward, up to the inevitable hour. For the most part, those who went to la Roche Mauprat did not return. As for me, I went there, not to suffer death, but to be betrothed to it. Very well! I will live till the day of my marriage, and if Bernard is too odious to me, I will kill myself after the ball."

"Edmée, your head seems to be full of silly romances," said the abbé, impatiently. "Your father, God be praised! will never consent to such a marriage; he has given his word to M. de la Marche, and you also have given him your word. Is your promise to Bernard the only one that is binding?"

"My father will consent with joy to a contract that will perpetuate directly his name and his line. As for M. de la Marche, he will free me without my taking the trouble to ask him. As soon as he knows that I passed two hours at la Roche Mauprat, there will be no need of any other explanation."

"He must be very unworthy the esteem I feel for him, if he thinks the less of you on account of an unfortunate adventure, from which you escaped pure."

"Thanks to Bernard," said Edmée; "for, after all, I owe him gratitude; in spite of his limitations and conditions, he gave me my freedom, and such an act was grand, — was inconceivable, — on the part of a Coupe-Jarret."

"Heaven preserve me from denying the good qualities which education might have developed in this young man! It is because he has such qualities that it will be possible to make him listen to reason."

"To be educated? Never will he consent to study; and even if he should, he would fail, just as Patience did. One who has lived a merely animal life cannot force his mind to submit to the rules of intelligence."

"I agree with you; moreover, I am not speaking of that. I speak of having an explanation with him, and making him comprehend that he is bound in honor to free you from your promise, and make up his mind to your marriage with M. de la Marche. Either he is a brute, unworthy all esteem, all consideration, or he will feel how criminal and foolish his course has been, and will yield honestly and wisely. Release me from my promise of secrecy. Authorize me to speak to him freely, and I answer for my success."

"I answer for your failure, for my part," said Edmée; "and, besides, I could not consent to such a step. Whatever Bernard may be, I must conclude my duel with him in good faith; and if I should act as you wish, he would have reason to believe that I had been deceiving him hitherto."

"Very well, there is another course, and that is to confide in the honor and wisdom of M. de la Marche. Let him judge your situation freely, and decide. You have a good right to confide your secret to him, and you can be sure of his honor. If he has the cowardice to abandon you in such a position, as a final resource you can take refuge from Bernard's violence in a convent. You can remain secluded for several years, and can pretend to take the veil. The young man will forget you, and you can regain your liberty."

"That, in fact, is the only reasonable course, and I have already thought of it; but it is not time to have recourse to it yet."

"Certainly not. You must first try the avowal to M. de la Marche. If he is a man of heart, which I do not doubt, he will take you under his protection, and will

make it his duty to remove Bernard, whether through persuasion or authority."

"What authority, abbé, if you please?"

"That which custom allows one gentleman to exert over his equal: honor and the sword."

"Ah! abbé, are you also so bloodthirsty? Such a meeting is precisely what I have most wished to avoid, and what I will avoid, although at the cost of my life and honor. These two men must not fight a duel."

"It is natural that you should feel so; one of them is very properly dear to you. But, in such a duel, it is evident that M. de la Marche would not be the one in danger."

"Then it would be Bernard!" cried Edmée, vehemently. "Know, then, that I should abhor M. de la Marche if he challenged that poor child, who can only defend himself with a stick or a sling, to fight a duel. How can you think of such a thing, abbé? How much you must hate that unhappy Bernard! And how should I feel—I, who had made my husband cut his throat, to thank him for having saved me at the peril of his life. No, no! I will not suffer any one either to provoke him or to humiliate him, or to afflict him. He is my cousin; he is a Mauprat; he is almost a brother. I will not allow him to be driven from this house. I will rather go myself."

"Your sentiments are very generous, Edmée," responded the abbé; "but with what warmth you express them! I am confounded; and if I did not fear to offend you, I should acknowledge that this solicitude for the young Mauprat suggests a strange thought to me."

"Very well, what is it?" replied Edmée, bluntly.

"I will tell you, since you insist upon it: it is that you seem to feel a much more lively interest in this young man than in M. de la Marche, and I should prefer to remain of a contrary opinion."

"Which of them needs my interest the most, bad Christian?" said Edmée, smiling. "Is it not the hardened sinner, whose eyes have not seen the light?"

"But finally, Edmée, you love M. de la Marche, do you not? Do not jest, in the name of heaven!"

"If by love," she replied, seriously, "you mean confidence and friendship, I love M. de la Marche, and if you mean compassion and solicitude, I love Bernard. It remains to be seen which affection is the stronger. That is your affair, abbé; it troubles me but little, for I feel that I love only one person with passion, and that is my father; and only one thing with enthusiasm, and that is my duty. I shall regret, perhaps, the attentions and devotion of the lieutenant-general, and it will grieve me to make him suffer, — as I must soon do, by telling him that I cannot be his wife, — but this does not make me despair, because I know that M. de la Marche will easily console himself;—I am not jesting, abbé, M. de la Marche is a frivolous man, and a little cold."

"If you do not love him more than your words seem to imply, so much the better! Amid many sorrows, one regret will be spared you. And yet, in learning your indifference to him, I lose my last hope of seeing you escape Bernard Mauprat."

"Nay, my friend, do not be disheartened; either Bernard will improve under the influence of friendship and nobility of sentiment, or I shall escape him."

"But in what way?"

"By the door of the convent, or by that of the tomb."

As she spoke thus, in a calm voice, Edmée threw back her long black hair, which had fallen over her shoulders, and had partly covered her face.

"Fear not," she said, "God will come to our aid; it is foolish and impious to doubt Him when we are in danger. Are we then atheists, to be thus discouraged? Let us go and see Patience; he will have something to say that will reassure us; he is the old oracle who solves all problems, without understanding any of them."

They proceeded on their way, and I remained, astounded and dismayed.

Oh! how different was this night from the preceding one! What new steps I had just taken in life; no longer wandering amid flowering paths, but goaded on over arid rocks. At last I comprehended the odious character of the part I had been playing: I had just read,

in the very bottom of Edmée's heart, the fear and disgust with which I inspired her. Nothing could calm my grief, for there was no longer anything that could excite my anger. She did not love M. de la Marche: she was playing neither with him nor with me; she loved neither of us. How had I been able to believe that her generous pity for me, that her sublime devotion to the oath she had sworn, was love? How, in the hours when this presumptuous chimera abandoned me, could I have thought that, in order to resist my passion, she must necessarily feel love for another? At last, I had no longer any excuse to offer for my frenzy; by yielding to it, I could obtain nothing but Edmée's flight, or her death. Her death! At this thought my blood froze in my veins, my heart stood still, and I felt it penetrated by the keenest pangs of remorse.

This miserable evening was to me like a revelation from on high. At last I understood the laws of modesty and holy liberty, which my ignorance had been outraging and blaspheming hitherto. They astonished me more than ever, but at least I recognized them; from this time they were self-evident to me. The strong and sincere soul of Edmée appeared before me like the stone of Sinai, upon which the finger of God had just traced the immutable truth. Her virtue was not feigned; her knife was sharpened, and always ready to wash out the contamination of my love! I was so terrified at the danger I had run of seeing her die in my arms, so dismayed at the insult I had offered her in hoping to vanquish her resistance, that I tried to devise the extremest measures for repairing my crimes and restoring her to repose.

The only thing which I felt that I could not do was to go away; for, at the same time that the sentiments of esteem and respect were revealed to me, my love, changing, so to say, its nature, was purified and ennobled, and took possession of my entire being. Edmée appeared to me under a new aspect. She was no longer the beautiful young girl, whose presence troubled my senses, but a young man of my own age, — beautiful as a seraph, proud, courageous, inflexibly honorable, — capable of the

sublime friendship that unites brothers in arms, but feeling a passionate love only for Divinity, like those paladins, who, amid a thousand trials, march to the Holy Land clad in armor of gold.

From this moment my love descended from the stormy regions of the brain into the healthful domain of the heart, and devotion no longer seemed to me an enigma. I resolved to prove, the very next day, my submission and tenderness. It was very late when I entered the house; I was worn out with fatigue, dying with hunger, exhausted with emotion. I went into the store-room, and taking a piece of bread, ate it steeped in my tears. The fire was extinguished in the stove, and I leaned against it; the room was faintly illumined by the dying light of an exhausted lamp. Edmée entered without seeing me, and, taking some cherries from a box, slowly approached the stove; she was pale and abstracted. When she saw me she uttered a cry, and let the cherries fall.

"Edmée," I said, "I implore you never again to be afraid of me; it is all that I can say, for I do not know how to explain myself; and yet I had resolved to tell you many things."

"You shall tell them another time, my good cousin," she answered. She tried to smile, but she could not conceal her fear on finding herself alone with me.

I did not try to detain her; I experienced a lively sense of grief and humiliation at her distrust, and had no right to complain. And yet no man ever stood in greater need of encouragement.

As she was about to quit the room my heart seemed breaking, and I burst into tears, as on the previous evening at the window of the chapel. Edmée stopped at the threshold of the door, hesitated for a moment, and then, overcoming her fears in the goodness of her heart, returned towards me, and paused several steps from my chair.

"Bernard, you are unhappy," she said; "is it my fault?"

I could not answer, — I was ashamed of my tears; but the more I tried to restrain them the more violently

my breast heaved with sobs. With beings so physically strong as I was, tears are convulsions, — mine resembled an agony.

"Come, then! What troubles you?" cried Edmée, with the bluntness of a fraternal friendship.

She ventured to lay her hand upon my shoulder, and looked at me impatiently, while a great tear rolled over her cheek. I threw myself upon my knees, and tried to speak, but this was still impossible; I could only articulate the word to-morrow several times.

"To-morrow! What of to-morrow?" said Edmée. "Do you mean that you are not happy here? Do you want to go away?"

"I will go if you wish it," I said; "say, do you want never to see me again?"

"I do not want that at all," she answered; "you will remain, will you not?"

"Command," I replied.

She looked at me in the greatest surprise: I remained upon my knees; she leaned upon the back of my chair.

"For my part, I am sure that you are very good," she said, as if in reply to an inward doubt; "a Mauprat cannot do anything half way; and since you have been good a quarter of an hour, it is certain that you will lead a noble life."

"I will, indeed," I replied.

"Truly?" she said, with a naive and simple joy.

"On my honor, Edmée, and on yours! Dare you shake hands with me?"

"Certainly," she said.

She held out her hand, but she trembled.

"You have been forming good resolutions, then?" she said.

"I have formed such resolutions, that you shall never have to reproach me again," I answered. "And now retire, Edmée, and do not bolt your doors any more; you have nothing more to fear from me; I shall never wish anything but what you wish."

She could not take her eyes from me, such was her surprise; at last she pressed my hand, and withdrew, but

returned several times to gaze at me, as if she could not believe in such a rapid conversion; finally she stopped at the door, and said in an affectionate voice, —

"You, too, must go and rest; you are fatigued, and you have been sad, and very much changed, for the last few days. If you do not wish to grieve me, you must take care of yourself, Bernard."

She gave me a gentle and friendly nod. There was an indefinable expression in her large eyes, already hollowed by suffering, — an expression in which distrust and hope, affection and curiosity, were visible alternately, and again altogether.

"I will take care of myself — I will sleep — I will not be sad," I answered.

"And will you work?"

"And I will work. — But you, Edmée, — will you pardon me all the sorrow I have caused you, and will you love me a little?"

"I will love you a great deal," she answered, "if you will always be as you are this evening."

The next day, as soon as it was light, I went to the abbé's room. He had already risen, and was reading.

"Monsieur Aubert," I said to him, "you have proposed several times to give me lessons. I have come to beg you to put your obliging offer into execution."

I had passed a great part of the night in preparing this opening speech, and settling how I would behave to the abbé in our new relation. I did not really hate him, for I felt that he was good, and that it was only my faults that he disliked; and yet I regarded him with a great deal of bitterness. I knew in my soul that I deserved all the harsh things that he had said of me to Edmée; but I could not help thinking that he might have dwelt a little more upon my good qualities, to which he had so briefly referred, and which could not have escaped a man of his sagacity. I had resolved, therefore, to treat him with great pride and coldness. To accomplish this, I thought, logically enough, that it would be necessary for me to show a great deal of docility while my lesson lasted, and to leave him as soon as it was ended, with a

brief expression of thanks. In a word, I wished to humiliate him in his character of teacher; for I was not ignorant that he owed his support to my uncle, and unless he renounced that support, or appeared ungrateful, I knew that he could not refuse to teach me. In all this I reasoned very well, but in a very bad spirit; and, in time, I regretted my conduct so much that I made him a sort of friendly confession, and demanded absolution.

At present, however, I will merely say that I revenged myself fully, during the first few days of my conversion, for my imaginary wrongs. The abbé's prejudices were but too well founded, and, indeed, he would always have deserved the title of Just, awarded him by Patience, if his natural impulses had not been checked by a habit of distrust. The persecutions of which he had so long been the object had inspired him with a feeling of instinctive fear, which made it very difficult for him to confide in others, — a peculiarity that rendered his confidence only the more precious to those upon whom it was bestowed. In after years I noticed this character among many honest priests. They generally have the spirit of charity, but not the sentiment of friendship.

I wished to make him suffer, and I succeeded. Spite inspired me; I behaved like a true gentleman in the presence of his inferior. My deportment was admirable; I was very attentive, very polite, and frigidly cold. I gave him no opportunity to make me blush for my ignorance; and, to prevent this, I stated, in advance of anything that he could say, that I was utterly ignorant, and begged him to teach me all branches in their most elementary state. After I had taken my first lesson, I read in his penetrating eyes, which I myself had learned to penetrate, a desire to pass out of this coldness into some sort of intimacy; but I paid no attention to his advances. He thought to disarm me by praising my application and intelligence.

"You give yourself too much trouble, Monsieur Abbé," I replied; "I have no need of encouragement. I do not believe at all in my intelligence, but I am very sure of my industry: and as it is myself alone whom I serve

by applying myself to the best of my ability to my studies, you have no reason to pay me any compliments."

While speaking thus, I bowed; and returned to my room, where I immediately set to work upon the French theme which he had given me.

When I went to breakfast I saw that Edmée had already been informed of the first step that I had taken in fulfilment of my promise. She shook hands with me, and called me her good cousin several times in the course of the breakfast, and with so much emphasis, that the face of M. de la Marche, usually so inane, expressed surprise, or something approaching it. I hoped that he would seek an opportunity of demanding an explanation of my rudeness on the day before; and, although I had resolved to display great moderation in this conversation, I felt very much wounded at the care that he took to avoid it. His indifference to an insult coming from me showed that he regarded me with scorn; I suffered greatly, but my fear of displeasing Edmée gave me strength to restrain my anger.

It seems incredible that my idea of supplanting this man should not have been shaken, for a moment, by the humiliating experience through which I had to pass in order to gain the most fundamental ideas upon all subjects. I felt the deepest repentance for the troubles that I had caused, and the greatest eagerness to repair them; any one else, feeling so, would have gone away, as the most certain method of restoring to Edmée her repose and independence. This plan was the only one that did not occur to me; or, if it did occur to me, I rejected the idea with contempt, as an avowal of open defection. Obstinacy, allied to temerity, flowed in my veins with the blood of the Mauprats. As soon as I saw a means of winning her whom I loved, I embraced it with audacity; and I think I should not have done otherwise, even if Edmée's disclosures to the abbé, in the park, had told me that she loved my rival. Such confidence on the part of a man who was taking his first lesson in French grammar, at seventeen years old, and who greatly exaggerated the length and difficulty of the studies that would be neces-

sary to make him the equal of his rival, argued, you will acknowledge, a certain moral force.

I do not know whether I was happily endowed as regards intelligence. The abbé assured me that it was so; but I imagine that all the honor of my rapid progress was due to my courage alone. It was such as to make me presume too much on my physical strength. The abbé had told me that at my age, with a strong will, all the rules of the language could be perfectly acquired in a month. At the end of a month I expressed myself with facility, and wrote purely. Edmée exercised a secret superintendence over my studies. It was she who decided that I should not be taught Latin; it was too late, she affirmed, to dedicate several years to an accomplishment, and was far more important to cultivate my heart and reason with ideas than to adorn my mind with words.

In the evening, under the pretext of wishing to recur to some favorite book, she read aloud, alternately with the abbé, passages from Coudillæ, Fenelon, Bernardin de Saint Pierre, Jean Jacques, and even from Montaigne and Montesquieu. These passages were certainly chosen in advance, and adapted to my capacity. I understood them very well; and, in secret, this surprised me, for, if I happened to open these same books in the day, I stumbled over every line. With the superstition natural to a youthful love, I imagined that the ideas of these authors acquired a magical clearness in passing through Edmée's lips, and that my mind opened miraculously at the sound of her voice. Still, Edmée did not display openly the interest which she felt in instructing me herself. She was certainly mistaken in thinking that she ought to conceal her solicitude — it would only have made me work with more zeal and ardor. But in this she was imbued with the spirit of *Emile*, and put into practice the systematic ideas of her dear philosopher.

As it was, I did not spare myself, and as I was altogether too energetic for prudence, I was very soon obliged to stop. Change of air, diet and habits, my vigils, the want of violent exercise, in a word, the frightful revolution that my entire nature had to undergo, in passing

from the state of a wild man of the woods to that of an intelligent man, brought on a nervous malady that made me almost crazy for several weeks, and a complete idiot for several days, and which finally passed away, leaving me weak as a child, completely annihilated as regards the past, but kneaded for the future.

One night, when my disorder was at its crisis, I saw Edmée, in a lucid moment, in my chamber. I thought at first that I was dreaming. The night-lamp cast a flickering light over her pale and motionless form, reclining in a large easy-chair. I distinguished a long tress of her dark hair unbound, and falling over her white robe. I raised myself, and, although so feeble that I could scarcely move, tried to get up from my bed. Patience immediately appeared, and gently stopped me. Saint-Jean was sleeping in another arm-chair. Every night two men watched beside me, to hold me in my fits of delirium. The abbé had frequently done so; and sometimes the brave Marcasse, who, before quitting Berry to make his annual tour through the provinces, had come to have a final hunt in the granaries of the chateau, and who had kindly relieved the fatigued servants in the discharge of this painful duty.

As I was utterly unconscious of being ill, it was very natural that the unexpected presence of the Solitary in my chamber should have caused me the greatest surprise, and should completely have disordered my ideas. My attack in the evening had been so violent, that my strength was exhausted. I abandoned myself, therefore, to melancholy vagaries; taking the hand of the *Bonhomme*, I asked him whether it was indeed the corpse of Edmée that was lying near me in the arm-chair.

"It is Edmée, living," he replied, in a low voice; "but she is asleep, my dear sir; do not wake her. If you want any thing, I am here to wait upon you, and I do it gladly, — yes, indeed!"

"My good Patience, you are deceiving me," I said; "she is dead, and I also, and you have come to bury us. You must put us into the same tomb,— do you hear?— for we are fiancés. Where is her ring? Take it, and put it on my finger; the wedding-night has come."

He tried in vain to overcome this hallucination; I persisted in believing that Edmée was dead, and I declared that I could not sleep in my tomb until I should have the ring of my wife. Edmée, who had watched several nights, was so exhausted that she heard nothing. Besides, I spoke low, like Patience, whom I imitated instinctively, after the manner of children or idiots. I persisted in my fantasy, and Patience, fearing that it would change to fury, went gently, and taking a carnelian ring from Edmée's finger, put it upon mine. I carried it instinctively to my lips; and then, crossing my hands upon my breast, in the attitude that is given to corpses in the tomb, fell into a deep sleep.

The next day, when they wanted to take the ring from me, I became furious, and they gave up attempting it. I fell asleep again, and the abbé removed it during my slumber; but, as soon as I opened my eyes, I perceived my loss, and began to rave. Edmée, who was in the room, ran to my side, and put the ring upon my finger, while reproaching the abbé. I became calm at once; and said, lifting my dim eyes to her face, —

"Is it not true that you will be my wife after death, as in this life?"

"Certainly," she said; "sleep in peace."

"Eternity is long," I said, "and I wish to fill it with the memory of your caresses, but I seek in vain; I find no pledge of your love."

She bent over me and kissed me.

"You are wrong, Edmée," said the abbé; "such remedies change to poison."

"Leave me, abbé," she replied, impatiently seating herself by my bed; "leave me, I implore you!"

I fell asleep with one of my hands clasped in hers, and repeating at intervals, —

"It is pleasant in the tomb; it is good to be dead, is it not?"

During my convalescence Edmée was much less expansive, but quite as devoted. I told her about my dreams, and she informed me which of them were real, — without this confirmation of certain facts I should always

have imagined that all my recollections had been alike illusory. I begged her to give me the ring, and she consented to do so. I should have added, in acknowledgment of so much goodness, that I would keep it as a pledge of friendship, and not as a betrothal ring, but I was incapable of such self-sacrifice.

One day I asked Patience, to whom alone I dared address this question, after M. de la Marche.

"He has gone!" he answered.

"How! Gone?" I replied; "for a long time?"

"Forever, if it please God. I know nothing about it, I never ask questions; but I was in the garden, by chance, when he bade her good-by, and the parting was as cold as a December night. They both said to each other, however, 'Au revoir!' 'Au revoir!' But although Edmée looked good and kind, as she always does, the other had the face of a farmer when he sees frost in April. Mauprat, Mauprat, they say that you have become a great student, and very well behaved. Remember what I told you: when you are old, there will be perhaps no more titles and no more lords. Perhaps you will be called father Mauprat, as I am called father Patience, although I have never been either a priest or the father of a family."

"Say on, — what are you coming to?"

"Remember what I told you," he repeated; "there are many ways of being a sorcerer, and one can know the future without giving one's self to the devil. For my part, I give my voice for your marriage with your cousin. Continue to behave well. You are learned; they say you can read fluently in the first book you see. What do you want more? There are so many books here that the sweat pours from my forehead only to see them. When I look at them, it seems to me that I begin again despairing of ever learning to read. You will soon be cured. If M. Hubert will listen to me, the wedding shall be on Saint Martin's Day."

"Be silent, Patience!" I said. "You make me very unhappy; my cousin does not love me."

"I tell you, for my part, that she does. You lie in

your throat! — as the nobles say. I know how she took care of you; and Marcasse, when he was on the roof, saw her through her window, kneeling in the middle of her room, at five o'clock in the morning, on the day when you were so ill."

The imprudent assertions of Patience, the tender care of Edmée, the absence of M. de la Marche, and, above all, the weakness of my brain, persuaded me for a time that what I desired was true; but, in proportion as I regained my strength, Edmée returned to the safe limits of a tranquil and prudent friendship. Never did any one recover his health with less pleasure than I, for each day my cousin's visits became shorter; and when I could quit my chamber, I passed only a few hours of the day with her, as before my illness. She had had the marvellous art to show me the most tender affection without allowing herself to be drawn into any new explanation about our mysterious betrothal. If I had not yet sufficient grandeur of soul to renounce my claims, I had at least acquired honor enough no longer to recall them, and I found myself on precisely the same terms as we had held to each other when I had been taken ill. M. de la Marche was in Paris, but, according to Edmée, he had been called away to fulfil the duties of his office, and intended to return at the end of the winter, which was now opening. Nothing in the conversation of the chevalier or the abbé implied that there had been any rupture between the fiancés. They did not speak often of the lieutenant-general, but when they did, it was naturally, and without repugnance. I fell into my old state of uncertainty, and found no other remedy for it than to fall back upon mere strength of will.

"I will force her to prefer me," I said to myself, raising my eyes from my book, and regarding Edmée's great impenetrable eyes fastened calmly upon M. de la Marche's letters, which her father received from time to time, and which he handed her after having read them. I plunged again into study. For a long time I suffered from severe pains in the head, but I bore them with stoicism. Edmée, during the winter evenings, resumed the course of

reading which she was carrying on indirectly for my benefit. I astonished the abbé anew by my aptitude, and the rapidity of my triumphs. His kindness during my illness had disarmed me; and although I could not love him cordially, knowing that he was not my friend with my cousin, I showed him much more confidence and regard than in the past. His long conversations were more useful to me than my lessons; he and my cousin, moreover, took me with them in their walks through the park, and in their philosophical visits to the snow-covered cottage of Patience. In this way I had longer and more frequent interviews with Edmée. My conduct was such, that her confidence was restored, and she no longer feared to be alone with me. But I had scarcely any opportunity of proving my heroism in such cases; for the abbé, whose prudence could not be lulled to sleep, was always at our heels. I no longer suffered, however, from this surveillance; on the contrary, it pleased me; for, in spite of all my resolutions, mysterious storms sometimes agitated my senses, and once or twice I left Edmée abruptly, when I chanced to be alone with her, to conceal my trouble. Our life was tranquil and serene in appearance, and for a time it was so in reality; but soon I troubled it more than ever by a vice which education developed in me, and which hitherto had remained buried under my more offensive but less fatal faults: this vice, the despair of my new life, was vanity.

In spite of their excellent system, the abbé and my cousin committed the fault of praising me too much for my progress. They had been so little prepared for my perseverance, that they paid all honor to my superior faculties. Perhaps, also, a slight feeling of personal triumph led them to exaggerate the success they had achieved in applying their philosophical ideas to my development. What is certain is, that I easily allowed myself to be persuaded that I was remarkably intelligent, and was a man very much above the common. Soon my dear instructors reaped the sad fruit of their imprudence, but it was already too late to arrest the growth of my immoderate self-love.

Very likely this fatal passion, repressed by the bad treatment that I had received in my childhood, was only awakened from a deep sleep. The germ of the virtues and vices which are developed in the course of our life by circumstances, most probably exist within us from our earliest childhood. As for me, I had never before found any nourishment for my vanity; for of what could I have boasted during the first few days that I passed with Edmée? But, as soon as this nourishment was found, suffering vanity arose triumphant, and inspired me with as much presumption as it had before suggested awkward timidity and ferocious reserve. I was, besides, as delighted with my ability to communicate my thoughts freely, as a young falcon who forsakes his nest for the first time, and tries his newly-grown wings. I became as talkative as I had been silent. My friends were too much pleased with my babble. I had not the good sense to see that they listened to me as to a spoiled child; I thought myself a man, and, what is more, a remarkable man. I became arrogant, and supremely ridiculous.

My uncle, the chevalier, who had not interfered with my education, and who had only smiled with paternal goodness at my first steps in my new career, was the first who perceived the false direction which I had taken. He thought it out of place in me to argue with him in a loud voice, and he said so to his daughter. She admonished me gently; and told me, to enable me to bear her remonstrances, that I had been right in our discussions, but that her father was not of an age to be converted to new ideas, and that I owed it to his patriarchal dignity to suppress my enthusiastic assertions. I promised to be more careful, but I did not keep my word.

The fact is that the chevalier was imbued with many prejudices. He had received a very good education, for his time, and for a country nobleman; but the age had advanced more quickly than he. Edmée, ardent and romantic, and the abbé, sentimental and systematic, had advanced more quickly than the age; and if the immense disagreement which existed between them and the patriarch was scarcely felt, it was owing to the respect with

try would be diminished by intercourse with the world, I was dreaming of appearing like a conqueror in that world so much disparaged by our philosophers. We started upon our journey on a beautiful morning in March. The chevalier, with his daughter and Mademoiselle Leblanc, rode in front, in a post-chaise; I followed, in another chaise, with the abbé and my valet-de-chambre Saint-Jean, — the abbé unable to conceal his joy at the thought of seeing the capital for the first time in his life, and Saint-Jean making deep bows to all the people who passed us, so as to keep up his politeness.

XII.

THE aged Bernard, tired with so much talking, dismissed us until the next day. At the appointed hour, we called upon him to keep his word, and he resumed his story in the following terms: —

This epoch marks a new phase in my life. At Saint Sévère I had been absorbed by my love and my studies; I had concentrated all my energy upon these two points. When we reached Paris a thick curtain was lifted before my eyes, and I beheld a new world full of marvels. For several days, however, by force of understanding nothing, I did not feel astonished at anything. I attributed a very exaggerated superiority to all the actors who appeared upon the scene; but I exaggerated no less the facility with which I would soon be able to equal this ideal power. Bold and audacious, I saw everywhere a challenge, and nowhere an obstacle.

I had a story to myself in the house that my uncle and cousin occupied, and passed the greater part of my time with the abbé. I was not dazzled by the material advantages of my position; but when I saw how many persons there were whose situation was uncertain, or actually uncomfortable, I began to appreciate the blessings of my lot. I was gratified by the excellent character of my tutor; and the respect of my lackey no longer annoyed

me. With the freedom that I enjoyed, the money that was furnished me at will, and the athletic vigor of my youth, it is astonishing that I did not fall into some dissipation, if only that of gaming, which was not ill-suited to the combativeness of my disposition. My ignorance saved me. This made me exceedingly suspicious; and the abbé, who was very discerning, and who felt responsible for my actions, made a dexterous use of my disdainful shyness. He increased it about things that would have been injurious to me, and dissipated it in the opposite case. He surrounded me, moreover, with innocent amusements, which do not replace the joys of love, but which diminish the bitterness of its wounds. As for the temptations of debauchery, I did not know them. I had too much pride to desire to be intimate with any woman who would not have seemed to me, as Edmée did, superior to all others.

The dinner-hour reunited us, and in the evening we went out. In a few days I learned more of the world, by noticing what was going on there from the corner of a room, than I should have done in a year of conjectures and researches. I do not think that I should ever have understood anything about society, if I had seen it only from a distance. Nothing established any definite relations between my brain and the interests with which other men were occupied. As soon as I found myself in the midst of this chaos, I was able to make it assume some order, and to distinguish a great number of its elements. This entrance into life was not without its charm from the very first. I had nothing to demand, to desire, or to strive for in society. Fortune had taken me by the hand. One fine day it had drawn me from an abyss to seat me upon down, and make me the child of a noble family. The excitements of others amused me. My heart was interested in the future only at one mysterious point — the love that I felt for Edmée.

My sickness, far from diminishing my physical strength, had renewed it. I was no longer a dull and stupid animal whom digestion fatigued, and whom fatigue brutalized. There were new vibrations in every fibre of my

being, unknown harmonies arose in my soul; and I was astonished to discover in myself faculties for which I had never before suspected that there was any use. My good friends rejoiced at this transformation, without seeming surprised at it. They had augured so kindly of me from the first, that they seemed to have had no other mission all their lives than that of civilizing barbarians.

The nervous susceptibility which had just been developed in me, and which made me pay during all the rest of my life, by intense and frequent suffering, for the enjoyments and advantages that it procured me, had made me peculiarly impressible; and this quickness in feeling external influences was helped by an acuteness of senses such as is found among animals or savages. I was astonished at the etiolation of the faculties of others. These men in spectacles, these women with their sense of smell blunted by the use of tobacco, — these precocious old people, deaf and gouty before their time, annoyed me. The world appeared to me like a hospital; and when I found myself with my robust organization amid these infirm beings, it seemed to me that I could blow them into the air with a breath, like thistle-down.

I was so unfortunate and mistaken, consequently, as to contract a very foolish sort of pride: that of valuing myself upon the gifts of nature. This led me to neglect for a long time the real improvement of these gifts, as an unnecessary luxury. Preoccupied with the idea of the insignificance of others, I was prevented from elevating myself above those whom I regarded as my inferiors. I did not see that society is composed of elements of very little value, but that their arrangement is so skilful and solid, that it is only a master hand that can succeed in working in any additional portion. I did not know that there is no medium in society between the part of a great artist and that of a good workman. Now I was neither the one nor the other; and, to confess the truth, I have never succeeded, with all my ideas, in freeing myself from routine; with all my strength I have never got beyond doing with a great deal of difficulty, like other people.

Thus, in a few weeks, I passed from an excess of ad-

miration to an excess of disdain for society. As soon as I got at the real significance of its springs of action, they seemed to me so poorly developed, and by such a feeble generation, that the expectation of my teachers was disappointed before they suspected it. Instead of feeling awed, and seeking to lose myself in the crowd, I imagined that I could rule the world whenever I chose, and I entertained myself in secret with dreams that I blush to remember. If I did not make myself supremely ridiculous, it was owing to the very excess of my vanity; the fear of compromising myself in some way restrained me.

Paris at that time offered a spectacle that I shall not attempt to describe, for I have no doubt that you have studied it often and eagerly in the excellent pictures that have been left us by eye-witnesses, either in the form of general history, or private memoirs. Besides, such a picture would fall without my limits; I only promised to relate to you the main thread of my moral and philosophical history. To give you an idea of my intellectual activity, it will be enough to say that the American Revolution had broken out, that Voltaire had received his apotheosis in Paris, and that Franklin, prophet of a new political religion, had brought to the very bosom of the court of France the seed of liberty. Lafayette was secretly preparing his romantic expedition; and almost all the young noblemen of the day, carried away by fashion, novelty, and the pleasure inherent in all opposition to established forms which is not dangerous, were warmly advocating liberal ideas.

The opposition to the government assumed a graver phase, and performed a more serious work among the old nobles and the members of the parliaments. The spirit of the league had revived in the ranks of these ancient patricians and proud magistrates, who with one shoulder supported the tottering monarchy as a matter of form, and with the other lent substantial support to the encroachments of philosophy. The privileged classes labored ardently to accelerate the approaching ruin of their privileges, through discontent with the restrictions imposed upon them by the monarchy. They educated their sons

in constitutional principles, imagining that they were about to found a new monarchy in which the people would help to put them higher than the throne. It was for this reason that the greatest admiration for Voltaire, and the most ardent sympathy for Franklin, were expressed in the most brilliant saloons of Paris.

A movement so unprecedented, and, it must be acknowledged, so unnatural, had given an entirely new impulse, a sort of quarrelsome vivacity, to the cold and stiff formalities of the remains of the court of Louis XIV. It had also, to a certain extent, combined serious forms and an appearance of solidity with the frivolous manners of the regency. The pure but insignificant life of Louis XVI. counted for nothing, and imposed upon no one; never was there so much serious babble, so many hollow maxims, such a show of wisdom, and so many contradictions between words and conduct, as was displayed at this epoch among the so-called intelligent classes.

It was necessary to recall this to make you understand the admiration which I felt, at first, for a world apparently so disinterested, so courageous, and so ardent in the pursuit of truth; and the disgust that I soon felt on discovering its affectation and frivolity, and the abuse that everywhere prevailed of the most sacred words and holy convictions. I myself was sincere; and I supported, on the basis of an inflexible logic, my philosophical fervor, — that sentiment of newly revealed liberty which was then called the culture of reason. I was young, and had a good constitution, — the first condition, perhaps, of a healthy brain; my studies were not extended, but they were solid; my mind had been nourished with healthy and easily digested food. The little that I knew, therefore, served to show me that others knew nothing, or that they were deceiving themselves.

At first the chevalier did not see a great deal of company. Friend, from childhood, of M. Turgot and several distinguished men, he had not mingled with the *jeunesse dorée* of his time; but had lived a simple and sensible country life, after having fought bravely in the wars. His circle, therefore, consisted of several serious legal gentle-

men, several old soldiers, and some of the old and young noblemen of his province, who, like himself, were rich enough to spend one winter out of two in Paris. He had preserved, however, distant relations with a more brilliant set, where Edmée's beauty and elegant manners attracted attention as soon as she appeared. An only child, and quite rich, she was sought out by the leaders of society, — a class of procuresses in high places, who always have several young protegés, very much in debt, under their protection, whom they are anxious to establish at the expense of some provincial family. When it was known that she was the fiancée of M. de la Marche, the descendant of a very distinguished family, although himself on the verge of ruin, she was welcomed even more warmly; and, little by little, the modest saloon, which she had chosen for the reception of her father's old friends, became too small for the noblemen and professional men of wit and culture, and the great ladies with philosophical ideas, who were eager to know the young Quakeresse, or the Rose of Berry, — the names bestowed upon her by a fashionable woman.

Edmée's rapid success in a world in which she had been unknown, did not dazzle her in the least; and her self-control was so great that I could not find out, although I watched all her movements with the greatest anxiety, whether she was flattered at producing such an impression. She showed the most admirable good-sense in all that she did and said. Her bearing, at the same time naive and reserved, a certain blending in her character of unconsciousness and proud modesty, made her shine among the most brilliant and admired women. And this is the place to say that I was extremely shocked, from the first, at the tone and bearing of these women, so universally praised; their studied graces seemed to me ridiculous, and their great ease in society had the effect upon me of insupportable effrontery. Bold as I was, and yet unformed in my manners, I felt ill at ease, and out of countenance near them; and it required all Edmée's reproaches, all her remonstrances, to keep me from yielding to a profound scorn for the bold glances,

free toilettes, and alluring manners which the world called permitted coquetry, the charming desire of pleasing, amiability, and grace. The abbé agreed with me. When the guests had gone, we used to sit a little while together by the fire before separating. This is the time when it is most natural to gather up one's scattered impressions and share them with sympathetic beings. The abbé took my side against my uncle and cousin. The chevalier, a great admirer of the fair sex, although he had had but little experience of them, like a true French knight, undertook the defence of the beauties whom we so mercilessly attacked. He accused the abbé, laughingly, of reasoning about women like the fox in the fable about grapes. For my part, I was even more severe in my criticisms than the abbé. It was a way of telling Edmée pointedly how much I preferred her to all others; but she seemed more scandalized than flattered, and reproached me seriously with my disposition to censoriousness, which she said arose from an immense pride.

It is true that, after generously embracing the defence of the persons in question, she came over to our side, when, Rousseau in hand, we affirmed that the fashionable women of Paris have a cavalier air, and a way of staring a man in the face that is insupportable to a philosopher. Edmée could not object to anything that Rousseau said: she loved to confess, with him, that a woman's greatest charm is in the modest and intelligent attention that she gives serious discourse; and I was always citing his comparison between a superior woman and a lovely child, with large eyes full of sentiment, sweetness, and good-sense, asking timid questions, and proffering objections full of good-sense. I wanted her to recognize herself in this portrait which seemed made for her. I improved upon the text, and elaborated the portrait.

"A truly superior woman," I said, gazing upon her with ardor, "is one who knows enough never to ask a ridiculous and ill-timed question, and never to oppose people of merit; such a woman is able to keep silent, above all with fools whom she might ridicule, and the ignorant whom she might humiliate; she is indulgent to the

absurdities of others, because she does not care to show her wisdom, and is attentive to any good things they may say, because she desires to learn. Her great desire is to understand, and not to teach; her great art (since it must be confessed that there is an art of conversation) is not to bring forward too fierce antagonists, eager to display their learning and amuse the company by disputing about some question that nobody wants to understand, but to clear up all useless discussion by letting those talk who can throw light upon the subject. This is a talent that I do not see among these leaders of society. At their houses, I always see two fashionable lawyers and a dazzled audience, but no judge. They have the art of making genius look ridiculous, and common people seem dull and stupid; and one goes away saying, 'What fine talk!' and nothing more."

I think that I was in the right, but I remember, also, that my great indignation against these women arose from the fact that they paid no attention to people who imagined that they had merit, and who were not famous; and by these people, I meant myself, as you can perhaps imagine. On the other hand, in thinking of them now without prejudice and without wounded vanity, I am certain that these women treated the favorites of the public with systematic adulation out of vanity, and not because regarding them with a sincere admiration or frank sympathy. They were, in a manner, the managers of conversation; they listened with all their ears, and constrained the audience to listen religiously to all the nonsense that might come from an illustrious mouth, while they stifled their yawns and rustled their fans at every word that was uttered, no matter how sensible it might be, unless vouched for by a fashionable name. I do not know what airs the women *beaux esprits* of the nineteenth century give themselves; I do not even know whether there are any such people: it is thirty years since I have been in society, but as to the past, you can believe what I tell you. There were five or six of these women who were perfectly odious to me. One was a wit, and scattered her *bon mots* to the right and left, when they were immediately hawked

about in all the drawing-rooms, so that I had to hear them repeated twenty times a day; another had read Montesquieu and gave lessons to the oldest magistrates; a third played the harp horribly, but it was agreed that her arms were the most beautiful in France; and we had to endure the scraping of her nails on the strings so that she might take off her gloves with a timid and infantine air. As for the rest, they rivalled each other in affectation, and in silly hypocrisies, by which all the men, contemptibly enough, pretended to be duped. One alone was really beautiful, said nothing, and pleased by her ease and grace. She attracted me because she seemed unpretending, but she boasted of her ignorance so as to form a contrast with the others, by her piquant simplicity. One day I found out that she was intelligent, and from that time took a great dislike to her.

Edmée alone remained in all her fresh sincerity, in all her bright and natural grace. Seated on a sofa by the side of M. de Malesherbes, she was the same person whom I had so often gazed upon, seated on a stone bench at the threshold of the cottage of Patience.

XIII.

YOU can easily imagine that the attention which my cousin received awakened my sleeping jealousy. Since I had devoted myself to study, in obedience to her commands, I can scarcely tell you whether I had dared count upon her promise to be my wife when I could understand her ideas and sentiments. It seemed to me that that time had already come; for it is certain that I understood Edmée better, perhaps, than any of the men who courted her in prose and verse. I had fully made up my mind to take no further advantage of the oath extorted from her at la Roche Mauprat; but her last promise, made freely at the chapel window, and the conclusions that I had been able to draw from her conversation with the abbé, overheard by me in the park of Saint Sévère; the interest she had shown in keeping me from going away

and in directing my education, and the maternal cares that she had lavished upon me during my illness; did not all these things give me, if not a right over her, at least grounds of hope? It is true that she became cold as ice as soon as I betrayed my passion in my words or looks; it is true that I had not advanced a single step in my intimacy with her, since our first meeting; it is true, also, that M. de la Marche often came to the house, and that she was equally friendly with both: her manner was more familiar with me, and more respectful to him, but the difference in our ages and characters naturally led to this distinction, and it gave no indication of her preference. I might therefore attribute her promise to a decision of her conscience, the interest she took in teaching me, to the worship she paid to the dignity of human nature rehabilitated by philosophy, her calm and continuous affection for M. de la Marche, to a profound regret governed by force and wisdom of character. These perplexities tormented me cruelly. The hope of forcing her to love me by my submission and devotion had sustained me a long time, but this hope was beginning to grow feeble; for, it was allowed by all, that I had made extraordinary progress, prodigious efforts, and it was far from being true that Edmée's esteem for me had increased in the same proportion. She had not seemed surprised at my superior intelligence, as she called it: she had always believed in it; she had praised it more than it deserved. But she was not any more blind to the defects of my character and disposition, and she reproved me for them with a pitiless sweetness, with a patience that drove me to despair; for it seemed to prove that she had determined not to love me either more or less, whatever might happen.

In the meanwhile all paid her their addresses, and no one was accepted. It had been reported that she was betrothed to M. de la Marche; but no one understood any better than myself the indefinite delay of their marriage. People began to say that she was seeking an excuse to get rid of him; and they could find no other way of accounting for her repugnance, than by supposing that she was in love with me. My singular history had

made some noise: the women looked at me with curiosity, — the men showed an interest in, and a consideration for me, which I pretended to despise, but to which I was very sensible; and, as nothing gets credit without being more or less embellished, the most exaggerated stories were told about my wit, quickness, and learning. As soon, however, as M. de la Marche and myself had been seen in Edmée's presence, the ease and indifference of our manners put a stop to all these conjectures. Edmée treated us in public as she did in private: M. de la Marche, a lay figure without soul, was perfectly trained in fashionable manners; and I, eaten up by conflicting passions, was impenetrable through pride, and also, I must confess, through my pretensions to the sublimity of the American bearing. I must tell you that I had had the good fortune to be presented to Franklin as a sincere disciple of liberty. Arthur Lee had honored me with a sort of benevolent patronage, and had given me excellent advice; my head was just as much turned as those whom I ridiculed so unsparingly,—so much so, indeed, that this little triumph supplied a very necessary alleviation to my torments. Do not shrug your shoulders if I confess that I took the greatest pleasure in the world in not powdering my hair, in wearing coarse shoes, in appearing everywhere in a more than simple dress, extremely neat, and dark in color, — in a word, in imitating, as much as I could without being confounded with a real plebeian, the style and bearing of *Poor Richard*. I was in my nineteenth year, and was living in a time when every one played a part; that is my only excuse.

I might plead, also, that my too indulgent and too simple-minded tutor approved me openly; that my uncle Hubert, although making fun of me from time to time, let me do as I pleased, and that Edmée said nothing about this piece of absurdity, and did not seem to notice it.

The spring was passing away, — we were about to return to the country — the drawing-rooms were deserted, — and I was still in the same state of uncertainty. I noticed one day that M. de la Marche could not help betraying his desire to be alone with Edmée. I took

pleasure, at first, in making him suffer, by refusing to stir from my chair; but I thought I saw on Edmée's forehead the slight frown that I knew so well, and I went out, resolved to see the consequences of this tête-a-tête, and learn my fate, whatever it might be.

I returned to the drawing-room in about an hour. M. de la Marche stayed to dinner; Edmée was dreamy, but not sad; the abbé questioned her with his eyes, but she did not, or would not, understand him.

M. de la Marche accompanied my uncle to the *Comedie Francaise*. Edmée said that she had some writing to do, and begged permission to remain at home. I followed the count and the chevalier, but, after the first act, slipped away, and returned to the hotel. Edmée had given orders that no one was to be admitted, but I did not think that this applied to myself; it seemed perfectly natural to the servants that I should act like one of the family. I went into the drawing-room, trembling lest Edmée should have gone to her own apartment, where I could not have followed her. She was standing near the mantle-piece, amusing herself by pulling off the leaves of some blue and white asters that I had brought from the tomb of Jean Jacques Rousseau. These flowers recalled to me a night of enthusiasm, a brilliant moon,—the only hours of happiness, perhaps, that I could remember in my whole life.

"Already returned?" she said, without moving.

"That is a cold welcome," I answered; "do you want me to go to my room, Edmée?"

"No, you do not disturb me at all; but you would have gained much more by hearing *Mérope* than by talking with me this evening; for I warn you that I am in a state of idiocy."

"So much the better, cousin, you will not humiliate me; and, for the first time, we shall be on a footing of equality. But will you tell me why you despise my asters so much? I thought you would keep them as a relic."

"For the sake of Rousseau!" she said, smiling archly, without raising her eyes.

"Oh! that is what I mean," I rejoined.

"I am playing a very interesting game," she said; "do not disturb me."

"I know it," I said; "all the children of Varenne play it, and our shepherds believe in the results predicted by it. Shall I tell you what your thoughts are when you tear off these petals four by four?"

"Let us hear, great necromancer!"

"*A little*, that is how some one loves you; *much*, that is how you love him; *passionately*, another loves you so; *not at all*, and so you love that one."

"And can you tell, Monsieur le Soothsayer, who you mean by *some one and another?* I believe you are like the old pythoness, — you do not know yourself the meaning of your oracles."

"Can you not divine mine, Edmée?"

"I will try to interpret the enigma, if you will promise to do afterwards what the sphinx did when vanquished by Œdipus."

"Oh, Edmée!" I cried, "for a long time I have been beating my head against a wall on account of you, and your interpretations of me; and yet you have never guessed right a single time."

"Oh, mon Dieu! yes," she answered, throwing the bouquet upon the mantle-piece; "you shall see. I love M. de la Marche *a little*, and I love you *much*. He loves me *passionately*, and you love me *not at all*, — that is the truth."

"I forgive you, with all my heart, for your wicked interpretation," I replied, "on account of that word *much*."

I tried to take her hands, but she pulled them away; and, in truth, she was wrong, for if she had given them to me I should merely have pressed them like a brother, while her distrust awakened dangerous recollections. There was something very coquettish in her manner and appearance on that evening, of which I had never before seen any trace. I felt emboldened without well knowing why, and I ventured to tease her about her tête-a-tête with M. de la Marche. She took no pains to deny my insinuations; and began to laugh when I begged her to

thank me for the exquisite politeness with which I had withdrawn when she frowned.

This arrogant frivolity was beginning to irritate me a little, when a servant came in and gave her a letter, saying that the messenger was waiting for an answer.

"Draw up the table, and make me a pen," she said to me.

She carelessly unsealed the letter and glanced through it, while I, without knowing to what it referred, prepared the writing materials.

For a long time the crow-quill had been cut, — for a long time the paper, with its colored monograms, had been taken from the amber portfolio, but Edmée did not notice it, and did not prepare to use them. The open letter lay upon her knees, her feet were upon the andirons, her elbows rested upon the arms of her easy-chair,— her favorite attitude when in a reverie. She was completely absorbed. I spoke softly to her, but she did not hear me. I thought she had forgotten the letter, and had fallen asleep. In about quarter of an hour the servant returned, and asked, on the part of the messenger, whether there was an answer.

"Certainly," she replied; "let him wait."

She read the letter again with extraordinary attention, and began to write slowly; then she threw her answer into the fire, pushed her arm-chair away with her foot, walked up and down the room several times, and, suddenly stopping before me, looked at me coldly and severely.

"Edmée," I cried, rising impetuously, "what is the matter with you? and what can that letter, with which you are so strangely preoccupied, have to do with me?"

"What is that to you?" she answered.

"What is it to me?" I cried. "What is the air that I breathe, the blood that flows in my veins, to me? Ask me that, if you please; but do not ask me why each one of your words and looks interests me, for you know well that my life depends upon them."

"Do not talk nonsense, Bernard," she replied, returning to her chair in an abstracted manner; "there is a time for all things."

"Edmée, Edmée! do not play with the sleeping lion; do not reillumine the fire that smoulders under the cinders."

She shrugged her shoulders, and began to write with great animation. Her face was flushed, and, from time to time, she passed her fingers through her long ringlets, falling over her shoulders. She was dangerously beautiful in this abandon; she looked as if she loved: but whom? the person, without doubt, to whom she was writing. Jealousy devoured me. I went out hurriedly, and, crossing the antechamber, looked at the man who had brought the letter; he wore M. de la Marche's livery. I had expected it, but this certainty increased my fury. I returned to the drawing-room, slamming the door violently after me.

Edmée did not turn her head; she continued to write. I sat down opposite to her, and looked at her with eyes of fire. She did not deign to look up. I even thought that I saw a half smile upon her vermilion lips, which seemed to insult my agony. Finally she finished her letter, and sealed it. I arose and approached her, strongly tempted to snatch it from her hands. I had learned to control myself rather more than formerly; but I felt now that a single moment can sometimes overthrow, in passionate natures, the labor of many months.

"Edmée," I said, bitterly, with a frightful grimace which I intended for a sarcastic smile, "will you allow me to hand that letter to M. de la Marche's lackey, and to tell him, at the same time, at what hour his master can come to the rendezvous?"

"It seems to me," she answered, with exasperating tranquillity, "that I could have mentioned the hour in my letter, and that there is no need to tell his lackey."

"Edmée, you ought to manage me a little more," I cried.

"I don't care to do so the least in the world," she answered.

She threw the letter on the table near me, and went out to give her reply to the messenger herself. I do not know whether she intended me to read the letter,

but the impulse leading me to do so was irresistible. It was about as follows: —

"Edmée, I have at last discovered the fatal secret which, according to you, forms an insurmountable obstacle to our union. Bernard loves you; his agitation this morning betrayed him. But you do not love him, I am sure of that — that is impossible! You would have told me so frankly. The obstacle, then, is elsewhere. Pardon me! I have succeeded in finding out that you passed two hours in the den of the Mauprats. Unfortunate one! your misfortune, your prudence, your sublime delicacy only ennoble you the more in my eyes. Why did you not confide your misfortune to me from the first? With a word I would have calmed your sorrows and mine. I would have aided you to conceal your secret. I would have groaned over it with you; or rather, I would have effaced the odious recollection by the evidence of an attachment proof against change. But nothing is hopeless; that word, there is still time to utter it, and here it is. Edmée, I love you more than ever; more than ever I am determined to offer you my hand; deign to accept it."

This note was signed Adhémar de la Marche.

Scarcely had I finished reading it, when Edmée returned, and approached the fireplace anxiously, as if she had forgotten some precious object. I handed her the letter which I had just read, but she took it in an absent-minded sort of way, and bending over the hearth seized eagerly, and with evident joy, a piece of crumpled paper scarcely touched as yet by the flames. It was the first reply which she had written to M. de la Marche's note, and had not thought proper to send.

"Edmée," I said, falling upon my knees, "let me see that letter! Whatever it may be I will submit to the sentence dictated by your first impulse."

"In truth?" she said, with an indefinable expression. "Will you really do so? If I love M. de la Marche, and am making a great sacrifice in giving him up for your sake, will you be generous enough to release me?"

For a moment I hesitated; a cold sweat broke out all over me. I looked at her steadily, but her impenetrable

eyes did not betray her thought. If I had believed that she loved me, and was making a trial of my virtue, I might, perhaps, have played heroism; but I feared a snare, and was carried away with passion. I did not feel the strength to yield with a good grace, and I abhorred hypocrisy. I arose, trembling with anger.

"You love him," I cried; "acknowledge that you love him!"

"And if it were so," she answered, putting the letter in her pocket, "where would be the crime?"

"The crime would be in having lied hitherto, by telling me that you did not love him."

"Hitherto is saying a great deal," she answered, meeting my eyes without shrinking. "We have had no explanation upon this point since last year. At that time it is possible that I did not love Adhémar a great deal, and, at present, it is equally possible that I love him better than I do you. If I compare your conduct and his to-day, I see on the one hand a man without pride and without delicacy, who takes advantage of an engagement which my heart may not have ratified; and on the other hand, I see an admirable friend, whose sublime devotion braves all prejudices; who, believing me sullied by an ineffaceable insult, persists none the less in offering me his protection."

"What! The miserable coward thinks that I insulted you, and does not challenge me?"

"He does not believe that, Bernard; he knows that you rescued me from la Roche Mauprat, but he thinks that your succor came too late, and that I had been the victim of the other brigands."

"And he wishes to marry you, Edmée? Either he is really a sublime man, or he is more in debt than we think."

"Silence!" cried Edmée, indignantly; "this odious explanation of his generous conduct proceeds from a hard heart, and a perverse mind. Silence, if you do not wish me to hate you!"

"Say that you hate me, Edmée,—say it without fear; I know it!"

"Without fear! You ought to know that I do not do you the honor of fearing you. In a word, answer me: without knowing what I intend to do, do you understand that you ought to give me my liberty, and renounce your barbarous rights?"

"I understand nothing, except that I love you with fury, and that I will tear the heart out of any one who dares dispute you with me. I know that I will win your love at last, and if I cannot, never, at least, will I suffer you to marry another, while I am alive. You will have to walk over my body riddled with wounds, and bleeding at every pore, to put the marriage-ring upon your finger; moreover, I will dishonor you with my latest breath, by declaring that you are my mistress, and thus will trouble the joy of the one who triumphs over me; and, if I can stab you in dying, I will do it, so that in the tomb, at least, you may be my wife. This is what I intend to do, Edmée. And now play your subtlest game, — lead me from snare to snare, rule me with your admirable art; I can be duped a hundred times, because I am ignorant, but your intrigues will always end in the same way. I swear it by the name of Mauprat!"

"Mauprat *Coupe-Jarret!*" she answered, with a cold irony.

She turned to leave the room.

I was going to seize her arm when the door-bell rang; it was the abbé returning home. As soon as he came in, Edmée pressed his hand and retired, without speaking to me.

The good abbé, perceiving my agitation, questioned me with an assurance which his claims to my friendship gave him a good right to feel; but this was the only point upon which we had never had an explanation. He had sought in vain to win my confidence. He did not give me a single lesson in history without drawing from illustrious loves an example or precept of moderation or generosity; but he had not succeeded in making me say a single word upon this subject. I could not altogether pardon him for having injured me with Edmée. I suspected that he was still unfavorable to my hopes, and

held myself on guard against all the arguments of his philosophy and the seductions of his friendship. I left him anxious and unhappy, and went to my room, where I threw myself upon my bed and hid my head in the coverings, so as to stifle my old sobs; pitiless conquerors of my pride and anger.

XIV.

THE next day I gave myself up to despair. Edmee was cold as ice, and M. de la Marche did not appear. I thought I noticed that the abbé went to his house, and had a conversation with Edmée about the result of their conference. In other respects they were perfectly calm, and I devoured my anxiety in silence; I could not get a moment alone with Edmée. In the evening I went on foot to M. de la Marche's house; what I wanted to say to him I do not know; I was in a state of desperation, that drove me to act without aim or plan. I learned that he had left Paris. Returning, I found my uncle very sad; he frowned on seeing me, and, after saying a few idle words in a constrained manner, left me with the abbé, who tried to make me talk, and succeeded no better than on the previous evening. For several days I tried to find an opportunity of talking with Edmée; she constantly avoided me. The preparations for our departure to Saint Sévère continued; she seemed neither sad nor gay. Finally, I slipped two lines into the pages of her book, begging an interview. I received the following reply in about five minutes:

"A conversation will lead to nothing. You persist in your indelicacy; for my part, I persist in my loyalty. An upright conscience cannot retract a promise. I have sworn never to be another's, and I shall not marry; but I have not sworn to be yours in spite of everything. If you continue unworthy my esteem, I shall remain free. My poor father is sinking into the tomb; a convent will be my refuge when the only tie that binds me to the world has been broken."

Thus I had fulfilled the conditions imposed by Edmée, and, for my recompense, she threatened to break all ties between us. I found myself just where I had stood on the day of her conversation with the abbé.

I passed the rest of the day shut up in my room; all night I walked to and fro in frightful agitation. I did not try to sleep. I will not tell you what my reflections were; they were not unworthy an honest man. At daybreak I was at the house of Lafayette. He procured me the necessary papers for leaving France, and told me to await him in Spain, where he was to embark for the United States. I returned to my hotel to obtain the baggage and money indispensable to the humblest traveller. I left a line for my uncle, to keep him from feeling anxious about my absence, which I promised soon to explain in a long letter. I implored him not to judge me until he had received this, and to believe that I would never forget his goodness.

I left before any one was up in the house, for I feared that my resolution would give way at the least sign of friendship, and I felt that I had abused a too generous affection. I could not pass Edmée's room without pressing my lips to the door; then, hiding my face in my hands, I rushed out like a madman, and scarcely stopped until I was on the other side of the Pyrenees. There, I took a little rest; I wrote to Edmée that she was free, and that I would not interfere with her in any way, but that it was impossible for me to see the triumph of my rival. I was firmly persuaded that she loved M. de la Marche, and I had resolved to stifle my love; I undertook more than I could perform, but the first effects of wounded pride gave me confidence in myself. I wrote also to my uncle, to tell him that I could not consider myself worthy the boundless goodness he had always shown me until I had gained my knightly spurs. I entertained him with my hopes of glory and a warlike fortune, with all the naiveté that belonged to my pride; and, as I knew well that Edmée would read this letter, I pretended to feel a joyful ardor, untroubled by regret. I do not know whether my uncle understood the true cause

of my departure, but my pride would not allow me to acknowledge it. I was equally reserved with the abbé, to whom I wrote, likewise, a letter full of gratitude and affection. I concluded my uncle's letter by begging him not to make any outlay upon my account on the sad chateau of la Roche Mauprat, assuring him that I could never make up my mind to live in it, and begging him to consider the fief purchased by him as the property of his daughter. I asked him merely to have the goodness to advance me two or three years of my income, so that I might be able to meet the expenses of my equipment, without making my devotion to the American cause a burden to the noble Lafayette.

My friends were content with my conduct and my letters. When I reached Spain I received a letter from my uncle, full of encouragement, and of mild reproaches for my abrupt departure. He gave me his paternal blessing, declared upon his honor that the fief of la Roche Mauprat should never be taken possession of by Edmée, and sent me a considerable sum, without touching my future income. The abbé added to similar reproaches, still warmer encouragement. It was easy to see that he preferred Edmée's repose to my happiness, and was overjoyed at my departure. And yet he loved me; and his friendship was touchingly expressed, in spite of the cruel satisfaction that mingled with it. He envied my glorious destiny. He was full of ardor for the cause of independence, and pretended that he had been tempted more than once to throw away his priest's robe and seize the musket; but this was a silly affectation upon his part. Timid and gentle by nature, he always remained a priest under the mantle of the philosopher.

A little note, without any address, looked as if it had been slipped in at the last moment, between these two letters. I knew very well that it was from the only person in the world whom I really cared for; but I had not the courage to open it. I walked on the beach, turning and re-turning this scrap of paper in my trembling hand; I feared to lose, in reading it, the sort of desperate calm with which my courage had supplied me. Above all

things, I feared that it would contain Edmée's thanks, and an expression of enthusiastic joy, behind which I should have seen her satisfaction in another love.

"What can she write to me?" I said; "why does she write to me? I do not want her pity, still less her gratitude."

I was tempted to throw this fatal note into the sea. At one moment, I lifted it above the waves; but instantly repenting, I put it in my bosom, and held it pressed to my heart for several seconds, as if I had believed in the occult vision described by professors of magnetism, who claim to read with the organs of sentiment and thought, as well as with the eyes.

Finally, taking courage to break the seal, I read these words: —

"You have acted well, Bernard; but I do not thank you, for I shall suffer from your absence more than I can say. Go, notwithstanding, where honor and the love of the holy truth call you; my prayers and blessings shall follow you everywhere. Return when you have accomplished your mission; you will find me neither married nor a nun."

Enclosed in this note was the cornelian ring that Edmée had given me during my illness, and which I had returned to her on leaving Paris. I put them both into a little gold box that I ordered to be made, and wore them like an amulet. The French government was opposed to Lafayette's expedition, and he was arrested; but as soon as he could escape from prison, he came to join us. I had had time to make my preparations; and I set sail with him, full of sadness, ambition, and hope.

You will not expect me to give you an account of the American war. Once again I will separate my life from the facts of history, by relating only my own adventures; nay, more, I will now omit even my personal adventures, since they form in my memory a chapter by itself, in which Edmée played the part of a madonna, constantly invoked, but invisible. I cannot believe that you will feel the least interest in listening to the incidents of a portion of my narrative in which this angelic being, — the

only one worthy to engage your attention, upon her own account, in the first place, and also because of the influence which she exerted over me, — is entirely absent. I need only mention that, having joyfully enlisted, in an inferior capacity, in the army of Washington, I was promoted regularly, but rapidly, until I became an officer. My military education was quickly gained. In that, as in everything that I have undertaken in my life, I threw myself with my whole soul; and, through the obstinacy of my will, triumphed over all difficulties.

I gained the confidence of my illustrious leaders. My excellent constitution fitted me to endure the fatigues of war; and my old brigand habits proved of immense service to me. I bore reverses with a calmness which was not displayed by all the young Frenchmen who had embarked with me, however splendid their courage may have been in other respects. Whatever courage I had was cool and obstinate, to the great surprise of our allies, who inquired curiously about my nationality more than once, when they saw how quickly I familiarized myself with their forests, and how, in cunning and suspicion, I proved a match for the Indians, who sometimes disturbed our manœuvres.

Amid my toils and marches, I had the good fortune to be able to improve my mind by associating with a young man of merit, given me by Providence for my companion and friend. The love of the natural sciences had induced this young man to join our expedition; and although he made a good soldier, it was easy to see that political sympathy had played but a secondary part in influencing his determination. He was not ambitious of promotion, and showed no aptitude for military studies. His herbarium and his zoological observations occupied him much more than the success of the war, and the triumph of liberty. He fought too well, on occasion, to deserve the reproach of slackness; but, up to the very eve of combat, and from the very next day, he seemed to be ignorant that there was anything more important in hand than a scientific excursion through the savannas of the New World. His portmanteau was always filled, not with money and goods, but

with specimens of natural history; and, while the rest of us, stretched upon the ground, listened attentively to the least sound warning us of the approach of the enemy, he was absorbed by the analysis of a plant or an insect. He was an admirable young man, pure as an angel, disinterested as a stoic, patient as a savant, and, with all that, cheerful and affectionate. When surprised and in danger, he thought and talked of nothing but his precious pebbles and invaluable bits of herbs, a collection of which he carried with him; and yet, if one of us happened to be wounded, he waited upon him with incomparable goodness and zeal.

One day he saw the little gold box that I wore under my dress, and instantly begged me to give it to him to hold some flies' feet and grasshoppers' wings, which he would have defended with the last drop of his blood. It required all my respect for the memorials of love to enable me to resist the urgent solicitations of friendship. All that he could obtain from me, was the privilege of slipping into my precious box an extremely pretty little plant, of which he claimed to be the first discoverer, and to which I granted an asylum by the side of the note and ring of my fiancée, only on condition that he would name it *Edmunda Sylvestris.* He gladly consented: he had given a wild apple-tree the name of Samuel Adams; that of Franklin he had bestowed upon some sort of industrious bee, and nothing pleased him more than to associate these noble enthusiasms with his ingenious observations.

I conceived an affection for him, which was the more ardent as it was my first friendship for a man of my own age. The charm that I found in this relation revealed to me a phase of life, faculties and needs of the soul, which I had not before known. As I had never been able to free myself from the earliest impressions of my childhood, as far as regards my love of chivalry, I liked to consider him my brother in arms; and I begged him to give me this title, to the exclusion of all his other intimate friends. He complied with a warmth which showed how much sympathy there was between us. He pretended that I was born to be a naturalist, on account of my adaptation for a

wandering life, and for rude expeditions. He reproached me a little for my preoccupation, and scolded me seriously when I walked carelessly over interesting plants; but he assured me that I was endowed with a methodical mind, and that I would be able to invent some day, not indeed a theory of nature, but an excellent system of classification. His predictions were not verified, but his encouragement reawakened my taste for study, and prevented my mind from falling into paralysis in the rude life of the camp. For me he was a messenger from heaven; without him, I might perhaps have become again, if not the Coupe-Jarret of la Roche Mauprat, at least the savage of Varenne. His teachings kept alive in me the sentiment of an intellectual life. He enlarged my ideas, he ennobled, also, my instincts; for, if a marvellous integrity and singular modesty kept him from taking part in philosophical discussions, he had an innate love of justice, and decided, with infallible sagacity, all questions of sentiment and morality. He gained an ascendancy over me which the abbé, hindered by the mutual suspicion that we had felt for each other from the first, had never been able to obtain. He revealed to me a great part of the physical world; and, what was more valuable, taught me to know myself, and to reflect upon my impressions. I succeeded, in a measure, in governing my impulses. My pride and violence I never corrected. We cannot change the essence of our being, but we can direct our various faculties to a good end, and almost succeed in making our very faults useful; to do this, moreover, is the great secret and the great problem of education.

The conversations of my dear Arthur led me into such a train of thought, that I succeeded in deducing logically, from my recollections, the motives of Edmée's conduct. I found her great and generous, above all in the acts which, seen in a false light and misunderstood, had wounded me the most. I did not love her more, that would have been impossible; but I learned to comprehend why I loved her invincibly, in spite of all that she had made me suffer. This sacred flame burned in my soul without paling a single instant, during the six years of our separation. In

spite of the excess of life overflowing my being, in spite of the instigations of an external nature full of voluptuousness, in spite of the bad examples and numerous opportunities soliciting human weakness that assailed me in a wandering and military life, I call God to witness that I preserved my robe of innocence intact, and that I did not know the kiss of a single woman. Arthur, whom a calmer organization rendered less susceptible to temptation, and who was almost always absorbed in intellectual labor, was not always so austere; he even urged me several times not to run the risks of an exceptional life, contrary to the law of nature. When I confided to him that a great passion preserved me from weakness and made my fall impossible, he ceased to oppose my fanaticism, as he called it (this was a word very much in vogue at the time, and which was applied indifferently to almost everything), and I noticed from this time that he seemed tc feel a greater regard for me, and I will even say a sort of respect, which he did not express in words, but revealed by a thousand little evidences of devotion and deference.

One day, when he was speaking of the great power which is exercised by outward mildness joined to an inflexible will, bringing examples both good and bad from the history of man, and particularly from the mildness of the apostles and the hypocrisy of priests of all religions, it occurred to me to ask him whether, with my fiery character and disposition, I could ever hope to exert any influence whatever over my near relatives. In using this last word I thought only of Edmée. Arthur replied that my influence would be of another kind than that of acquired gentleness.

"It will be," he said, "that of natural goodness. Warmth of soul, ardent and persevering affection, this is what is wanted in family life, and these qualities cause our very faults to be loved even by those who suffer the most from them. We ought therefore to try to conquer ourselves, out of love for those who love us; but to propose to be systematically moderate in love and friendship would be, I think, a foolish effort, a selfish labor, that would kill affection, at first in ourselves and soon after in

others. I spoke of intentional moderation only in exerting authority over the masses. Now, if you ever have the ambition" —

"You think, then," I said, without listening to his concluding remarks, "that I, such as you know me, would be able to make a woman happy, and to make her love me, in spite of all my faults, and the troubles they would induce?"

"Oh, amorous brain!" he cried, "how difficult it is to distract you. Well, then, Bernard, if you wish it, I will tell you what I think of your amour. The person whom you love so ardently loves you — at least unless she is incapable of loving — or is entirely without judgment."

I assured him that she was as much superior to other women as the lion to the squirrel, the cedar to the hyssop; and, by dint of metaphors, I succeeded in convincing him. He urged me then to tell him some details of the affair, so that he might judge of my relations to Edmée. I opened my heart without reserve, and told him my story from beginning to end. We were on the edge of a beautiful virginal forest, illumined by the last rays of the setting sun. The park of Saint Sévère, with its noble seignorial oaks, which had never been outraged by the axe, appeared before me, as I gazed upon the trees of this desert, free from all culture, spreading in their strength and primitive grace above our heads. The burning horizon recalled our evening visits to the cottage of Patience, and Edmée seated under the golden vines; and the singing of the joyous paroquets reminded me of the song of the beautiful exotic birds which she reared in her chamber. I wept when I thought of my separation from my country; of the great ocean rolling between us, which had engulfed so many exiles at the moment when they were about to salute their native shore. I thought, also, of the chances of fortune, of the dangers of war, and, for the first time, I was afraid to die; for my dear Arthur, pressing my hand in his, assured me that I was loved, and that he saw a new proof of affection in each act of rigor and distrust.

"Child," he said, "if she did not wish to marry you, do you not see that there are a hundred ways in which she might have rid herself forever of your pretensions? And if she did not feel an inexhaustible tenderness for you, would she have taken so much trouble, and made so many sacrifices to draw you from the abject condition in which she found you, and make you worthy of her love? What then, you who dream of the ancient prowess of the knights errant; do you not see that you are a noble knight, condemned by your lady to severe trials for having failed in the laws of gallantry, by claiming, in an imperious tone, the love that you should have implored upon your knees?"

Entering into a detailed examination of my crimes, he declared my punishment severe, but just; he then discussed the probabilities of the future, and advised me to submit until she should consider it right to absolve me.

"But," said I, "is it not a disgrace for a mature man, such as I now am, developed by reflection, and severely tried in war, to submit like a child to the caprice of a woman?"

"No," replied Arthur, "it is not a disgrace, and the conduct of that woman has not been dictated by caprice. It is only honorable to repair the evil we have done; and how few men can do it! It is only justice that offended modesty should reclaim its rights, and natural independence. You have behaved like *Albion*, and you should not be surprised, therefore, that Edmée acts like *Philadelphia*. She will only surrender on the condition of a glorious peace, and she is right."

He wished to know how Edmée had behaved to me during the two years that we had been in America. I showed him her few and short letters. He was struck with the good sense and perfect loyalty which the elevation and masculine conciseness of her style indicated. Edmée made me no promises, and did not encourage me by any direct hope; but she expressed an eager desire for my return, and spoke of the happiness we should all enjoy, reunited about the fireside, when my wonderful stories would wile away the winter evenings at the chatean. She

did not hesitate to say that I, together with her father, formed the sole solicitude of her life. And yet, notwithstanding a tenderness so unfailing, a terrible suspicion took possession of me. In one thing Edmée's letters, those of her father, and the long, flowery epistles of the abbé, were alike; they gave me no information about the events which might, and, in fact, which must have been occurring in the family. Each one talked about himself alone, and never said a word about the others; it was almost more than I could hope for, if they told me of the chevalier's attacks of gout. It seemed as if all three had entered into an agreement never to refer to the occupations or state of mind of the other two.

"Enlighten me and reassure me, if you can," I said to Arthur, "upon this point. There are moments when I imagine that Edmée is married, and that they have agreed not to tell me about it until my return. For, indeed, who can hinder her from marrying? Is it likely that she loves me enough to live alone for my sake? she, whose love, submissive to the dictates of a cold reason and austere conscience, can be resigned to see my absence indefinitely prolonged with the war? I have duties to fulfil here, undoubtedly; honor demands that I should defend my flag until the day when the cause I serve triumphs, or suffers irreparable defeat; but I feel that I prefer Edmée to these vain honors, and that, to see her an hour sooner, I would abandon my name to the scorn and curses of the universe."

"That last thought is suggested to you by the violence of your passion," said Arthur, smiling; "but you would not act as you say, if an opportunity occurred. When we are in conflict with a single one of our faculties, we imagine that the others are annihilated; but let an external shock awaken them, and we feel that the soul cannot be absorbed by a single interest. You are not indifferent to glory, Bernard, and if Edmée should urge you to renounce it, you would find out that it is more to you than you suppose; you have ardent republican convictions, and it is Edmée who was the first to inspire you with them. What would you think of her, and what, in

fact, would she be, if she should say to you now, 'There is something superior to the religion I have preached to you, to the gods I have revealed to you, — something more august and sacred, and that is my good pleasure'? Bernard, your love is full of contradictory demands. Inconsistency, moreover, is the characteristic of all human passions. Men imagine that a woman has no individual existence, and that she ought always to be absorbed in them; and yet they love no woman deeply, unless she elevates herself, by her character, above the weakness and inertia of her sex. You see in this country how all the planters dispose, at will, of their slaves, but they do not love them, however beautiful they may be; and if, by chance, they become fond of one of them, their first care is to set her free. Before this, they do not feel that they are dealing with a human being. The spirit of independence, the idea of virtue, the love of duty, which it is the privilege of elevated souls to feel, are necessary, therefore, in a companion; and the more strength and patience your mistress shows, the more you should cherish her, however you may suffer. Learn to distinguish between love and desire: desire seeks to destroy the obstacles which it encounters, and perishes on the ruins of a vanquished virtue; love wishes to live, and, that it may do so, it wishes to see the object of its worship defended for a long time by that diamond wall whose strength and splendor constitute its value and beauty."

Thus it was that Arthur explained to me the mysterious springs of my passion, and cast the light of his wisdom over the stormy darkness of my soul. Once he added, —

"If Heaven had given me the woman I have sometimes dreamed of, I believe that I could have made my love a noble and generous passion; but science takes too much time; I have never had the leisure to seek my ideal, and if I have met her I have not had the good fortune to recognize and study her. This happiness was reserved for you, Bernard; but you will not fathom natural history, — one man cannot have everything."

As for my suspicion about Edmée's marriage, the one

evil in the world which I dreaded, he rejected it utterly, as a morbid conceit. He thought, on the contrary, that Edmée's silence upon this subject was another proof of the admirable delicacy of her conduct and sentiments.

"A vain person," he said, "would take care to keep you informed of all the sacrifices she was making for your sake; she would enumerate to you the titles and qualities of the lovers she rejected; but Edmée's soul is too elevated, her character is too serious, to allow her to enter into such frivolous details. She regards your engagement as inviolable; and does not imitate those feeble souls who are always talking of their victories, so as to make a merit of that which real strength would find easy. She was born so faithful, that she does not even imagine that she can be suspected of being otherwise."

These conversations poured a salutary balm upon my wounds. I received news from the abbé, moreover, when, at last, France openly espoused the American cause, which altogether reassured me upon one point. He wrote that I would probably meet an old friend in the new world. The Comte de la Marche had obtained a regiment, and was departing for the United States.

"Between ourselves," added the abbé, "it was very necessary for him to make a career for himself. This young man, although modest and wise, has always had the weakness to yield to a family prejudice. He was ashamed of his poverty, and concealed it as one conceals a leprosy; so much so, indeed, that he has ended by ruining himself, from his unwillingness to allow the progress of his ruin to appear. The rupture of his engagement with Edmée was attributed, in the world, to these reverses of fortune, and it is even said that he was more in love with her dowry than herself. I cannot believe that he was influenced by mercenary views, and I merely suppose that he has met with the misfortunes to which a false idea of the value of the treasures of this world always leads. If you meet him, Edmée wishes you to show an interest in him, and to express the friendship which she has always felt for him. The conduct of your admirable cousin in this, as in all things, has been full of sweetness and dignity."

XV.

A LITTLE incident occurred in Varenne, a short time before the departure of M. de la Marche, after the letter of the abbé had been sent, which caused me an unexpected and agreeable surprise in America; an event, moreover, that was connected, as you will see in due time, with the most important events of my life.

Although severely wounded in the unhappy affair of Savannah, I was actively engaged in Virginia, under the command of General Green, in collecting the wreck of the army of Gates, whom I regarded as a hero far superior to his more fortunate rival, Washington. We had just learned of the debarkation of the squadron of M. de Ternay, and the sadness that had overcome us at this period of reverse and distress began to be dissipated by the hope of a succor more considerable than that which really arrived. I was walking in the woods with Arthur, at a short distance from the camp, and we took advantage of this moment of respite to talk upon some other subject than that of Cornwallis and the infamous Arnold. Long afflicted by the spectacle of the sorrows of the American nation, and the fear of seeing injustice and cupidity triumph over the cause of the people, we now yielded to a careless gayety. Whenever I had an hour of leisure I forgot my rude labors, and took refuge, in the oasis of my thoughts, in the family of Saint Sévère. According to my habit at such times, I related to the complaisant Arthur some of the absurd scenes of my début into civilized life on leaving la Roche Mauprat. Sometimes I described to him my first toilette at Saint Sévère, sometimes the scorn and horror with which Mademoiselle Leblanc regarded me, and her recommendations to her friend Saint-Jean, never to approach within reach of my arm. Amid these amusing figures, that of the solemn hidalgo Marcasse suddenly presented itself to my imagination, and I made a faithful and detailed picture

of the dress, walk, and conversation of this enigmatical personage. It may be that Marcasse was not really so comical as he appeared through the medium of my fancy, but, at twenty years old, a man is only a child; especially when he is a soldier, when he has just escaped great perils, and when the conquest of his own life fills him with a careless pride. Arthur laughed heartily in listening to me, and assured me that he would give all his most valuable collections for such a curious animal as I had described. The pleasure that he took in sharing my nonsense gave me additional verve; and I am afraid I could not have resisted the temptation of coloring my picture a little too highly, when a sudden turn in the road brought us in sight of a very tall man, poorly clad, and pitiably lean, who marched towards us with a grave and pensive air, and who was carrying in his hand a long sword, naked, and whose point was pacifically lowered to the ground. This personage bore such a strong resemblance to the one whom I had just described, that Arthur, struck by the coincidence, burst into inextinguishable laughter; he stepped aside to allow the Sosia of Marcasse to pass, and, completely overcome, threw himself upon the turf, in a fit of convulsive coughing. As for me, I did not laugh, for nothing which seems supernatural can fail to strike a man vividly, however accustomed he may be to danger. Leg in advance, eye fixed and arm extended, we approached each other, he and I, — not the ghost of Marcasse, but the respectable person, in flesh and blood, of the hidalgo mole-catcher.

I was petrified with surprise, to see what I had taken for a spectre carry his hand slowly to the brim of his hat and take it off, without losing a line of his height. I started back; and this emotion, which Arthur imagined was a joke upon my part, increased his gayety. The mole-catcher was not in the least moved; he thought, perhaps, in his calm judicial way, that this was the style of accosting people on the other side of the ocean.

But Arthur's gayety was very near becoming contagious, when Marcasse said, with the most incomparable coolness, —

"It is a long time, Monsieur Bernard, since I have had the honor of seeing you."

"It is a long time, indeed, my good Marcasse," I replied, gayly pressing the hand of this old friend; "but tell me by what unheard-of miracle I have had the good fortune to draw you here. Formerly you passed for a sorcerer; have I become one, too, without suspecting it?"

"I will tell you all, my dear general," answered Marcasse, who was apparently dazzled by my captain's uniform; "pray allow me to go with you, and I will tell you many things — many things!"

When he heard Marcasse repeat his last words in a lower key, as if echoing himself, — a peculiarity which I had been imitating only the moment before, — Arthur was again overcome with laughter. Marcasse turned towards him, and, having looked at him earnestly, saluted him with imperturbable gravity. Arthur instantly became serious; and, arising, returned his bow to the very ground, with comic dignity.

We returned together to the camp. On the way Marcasse related his story in his brief style, which, instead of simplifying his discourse, complicated it amazingly, by forcing his listener to ask a thousand fatiguing questions. This afforded immense diversion to Arthur; but, as you will scarcely feel the same pleasure in listening to an exact account of that interminable dialogue, I will confine myself to telling you how it was that Marcasse had decided to leave his country and his friends, and lend to the American cause the assistance of his long sword.

At the time when M. de la Marche was preparing for his journey to America, Marcasse, who was making his annual round over the beams and rafters of barns and granaries, had stopped, for eight days, at his chateau in Berry. The household of the count, upset by his approaching departure, spent their time in relating wonderful stories of that distant country, full of dangers and prodigies, from which, according to the *beaux esprits* of the village, no one ever returned without bringing such a large fortune, and so many ingots of gold and silver, that

ten vessels were necessary to carry them. Under his cold exterior, Marcasse, like arctic volcanoes, concealed a burning imagination, and a passionate love of the marvellous. Accustomed to live poised on the timbers of roofs, in a region decidedly more elevated than other men inhabited, and far from being indifferent to the glory of surprising daily all beholders by the boldness and ease of his acrobatic agility, he was carried away by the descriptions of this new Eldorado; and his enthusiasm was only the greater, because, as usual, he confided in no one. M. de la Marche was very much surprised, therefore, when Marcasse, on the eve of his departure, made his appearance, and proposed accompanying him to America as his valet-de-chambre. In vain did M. de la Marche represent to him that he was too old to leave a settled employment, and run the risks of a new career; Marcasse showed so much firmness, that, in the end, he gained his suit. Several reasons induced M. de la Marche to make this singular choice. He had resolved to take with him a servant who was older than the mole-catcher, and who followed him with great reluctance. This man had his confidence, — a favor that M. de la Marche found it difficult to bestow, for he kept up only a mere shadow of the retinue of a man of rank, and wished to be served with economy, prudence, and fidelity. He knew Marcasse to be scrupulously honest, and even singularly disinterested; there was something of Don Quixote in the soul of Marcasse, as well as in his person. He had found a sort of treasure in a ruin a short time before, — that is to say, a stone pot, containing a sum of about ten thousand francs, in old coins of gold and silver; and not only had he given it to the owner of the ruin, whom he might have deceived with perfect ease, but he had even refused any recompense, saying, in his concise jargon, "*Honesty that sells itself, dies.*"

The frugality of the hidalgo, his discretion and punctuality, could not fail to make him a valuable servant, if he could get into the habit of devoting these qualities to the service of another. The only thing to be feared was that he could not accustom himself to the loss of his indepen-

dence, but M. de la Marche thought that, before the squadron of M. de la Ternay should set sail, he would have time enough to make a sufficient trial of his new squire.

Upon his side, Marcasse felt a great deal of regret in taking leave of his friends and country; for if he had friends everywhere, everywhere a country, as he said, in allusion to his wandering life, he felt a very marked preference for Varenne; and of all his chateaux (he called all the houses at which he stopped his), the chateau of Saint Sévère was the only one at which he arrived with pleasure, and from which he departed with regret. One day, when he had lost his footing on the roof, and had had a serious fall, Edmée, then a child, had won his heart by the tears which she had shed over his accident, and the simple cares that she had bestowed upon him. Since Patience had lived on the outskirts of the park, he had felt a still greater attraction for Saint Sévère; for Patience was the Orestes of Marcasse. Marcasse did not always understand Patience, but Patience was the only one who understood Marcasse perfectly, — who knew how much chivalric honesty and exalted bravery was concealed under his bizarre exterior. Prostrate before the intellectual superiority of the Solitary, the mole-catcher paused respectfully, when Patience, seized by the poetic fury, became unintelligible to his modest friend. Then Marcasse, abstaining with a touching sweetness from misplaced questions and remarks, cast down his eyes, and nodded his head from time to time, as if he understood and approved, so that he might at least give his friend the innocent pleasure of being listened to without contradiction.

Notwithstanding, Marcasse understood enough of his philosophy to embrace republican ideas, and to share the romantic hopes of universal levelling, and a return to the equality of the age of gold, so ardently cherished by *Bonhomme* Patience. Having heard his friend remark several times that prudence was necessary in the cultivation of these doctrines (a precept, by the way, which Patience himself did not observe), the hidalgo, greatly assisted by habit and inclination, never spoke of his philosophy; but

he made a propagandist only the more efficacious, by hawking about from chateau to hut, from house to farm, those little cheap editions of the *Science du Bonhomme Richard*, and other small tracts of popular patriotism, which, according to the Jesuits, were circulated gratuitously among the lower classes by a secret society of Voltairean philosophers, devoted to the diabolical practices of freemasonry.

Revolutionary enthusiasm, therefore, had as much to do with the sudden resolution of Marcasse as love of adventure. For a long time the dormouse and polecat had seemed to him too feeble enemies, and the barn-field too narrow a field to call out all the resources of his restless valor. He read daily the papers of the preceding day at the houses where he stopped, and it seemed to him that this war in America, which was described as a reawakening of justice and liberty in the universe, must lead to a revolution in France. The ideas even then crossing the ocean, and invading all minds, really did exert this influence, but he understood all this literally. In his dreams he saw a victorious American army landing from numerous vessels, and bearing the olive-branch of peace, and horn of abundance, to the French nation. He saw himself, in this same dream, commanding an heroic legion, and reappearing in Varenne as warrior and legislator, the rival of Washington, suppressing abuses, overthrowing great fortunes, endowing each poor person with a suitable portion, and, amid these vast and rigorous measures, protecting the good and loyal families of the nobility, and assuring to them an honorable support. It is needless to say that the terrible necessities of a great political crisis had never been conceived of by Marcasse, and that not a drop of blood had ever stained the romantic picture which Patience unrolled before his eyes.

He was far enough from the fulfilment of these gigantic hopes while serving as the valet-de-chambre of M. de la Marche, but it was only by accepting this position that Marcasse could gain his end. The regiments of the body of troops destined for America had been filled for a long time, and it was only as a passenger connected with the expedition that he could take his place in a merchant

vessel accompanying the squadron. He had questioned the abbé upon all these points, without informing him of his project. His departure was a *coup de theatre* for all the inhabitants of Varenne.

Scarcely had he put his foot upon the shore of the Union, when he felt an irresistible longing to take his great hat and long sword, and go all alone through the woods, as it had been his custom to do in his own country; but his sense of duty forbade him to leave his master, after having entered into an engagement to serve him. He counted upon fortune, and fortune came to his aid. The war was much more bloody and active than had been anticipated, and M. de la Marche made the mistake of fearing that he would be embarrassed by the feeble health of his meagre squire. Perceiving, besides, his desire for liberty, he offered him a sum of money, and letters of recommendation, so that he might join the American troops as a volunteer. Marcasse, knowing the state of his master's fortune, refused the money, and accepting only the letters, departed as lightly as the most agile of the weasels that he had ever slain.

His intention was to go to Philadelphia; but, through an accident which it is not worth while to relate here, he learned that I was at the South, and thinking, with good reason, that he would find in me advice and support, he had come to join me, alone and on foot, across an unknown country, almost a desert, and encompassed with all sorts of perils. His clothes alone had suffered: his yellow face had not changed a shade, and he did not seem any more surprised at his new experiences than if he had been walking from Saint Sévère to Gazeau Tower.

The only unusual thing that I noticed in him was, that he kept turning around every little while and looking behind him, as if intending to call some one; then he would smile and sigh almost at the same moment. I could not help asking him what was the cause of his anxiety.

"Alas!" he answered, "habits cannot be changed; a poor dog! a good dog! Always said: 'Here, Blaireau! Blaireau, here!'"

"I understand," I said; "Blaireau is dead, and you

cannot get used to the idea of no longer seeing him at your heels."

"Dead!" he cried, with a gesture of horror. "No, God be praised! Friend Patience, great friend! Blaireau happy, but sad, like his master; his master alone!"

"If Blaireau is with Patience," said Arthur, "he is really happy, for Patience wants for nothing; Patience will cherish him, for your sake, and you will certainly see once more your worthy friend and your faithful dog."

Marcasse turned his eyes upon the individual who seemed so well acquainted with his history; but, convinced that he had never seen him before, he went through the ceremony that he always performed when bewildered or perplexed: he took off his hat, and bowed respectfully.

Marcasse, at my prompt recommendation, was enrolled in my company, and a short time afterwards was appointed sergeant. This worthy man made the whole of the rest of the campaign with me, and made it bravely; and when, in 1782, I enlisted under my own flag, and joined the army of Rochambeau, he followed me, wishing to share my fate to the last. At first, he afforded me amusement rather than society; but soon his good conduct and calm intrepidity gained the esteem of all, and I had every reason to be proud of my protégé. Arthur also conceived a great friendship for him; and, when off duty, he accompanied us in all our walks, carrying the box of the naturalist, and slaying serpents with his sword.

But when I tried to make him speak of my cousin, he did not satisfy me. Whether it was that he did not understand the interest that I felt in knowing all the details of the life which she was leading far from me, or whether he had made a vow not to speak upon this subject, I do not know; but he did not dissipate effectually the doubts by which I was tormented. He said, indeed, that there was no talk about her marrying anybody; but although I was accustomed to his vague manner of expressing himself, I imagined that he made this statement with a certain embarrassment, like a man who has promised to keep

a secret. Honor prevented me from insisting with such urgency as to betray my hopes; there always remained between us, therefore, one forbidden subject, which I constantly avoided, and to which, in my own despite, I was constantly returning. As long as Arthur was near me, I kept my reason, and interpreted Edmée's letters in the most loyal way; but when I had the misfortune to be separated from him, I became very unhappy, and my sojourn in America oppressed me more and more.

My separation from Arthur took place when I left the American army, to fight under the command of the French general. Arthur was an American; and, besides, he was only awaiting the conclusion of the war to retire from service and establish himself in Boston, with Dr. Cooper, who loved him like a son, and who had engaged to get him an appointment in the library of the society of Philadelphia, in the position of principal librarian. This was all that Arthur had desired as the recompense of his labors.

The events which filled these closing years belong to history. I saw, with a wholly personal joy, peace established, and the existence of the United States proclaimed. Grief had mastered me; my passion had only been increased by absence, and it left no room in my heart for the intoxication of military glory. I went, before my departure, to embrace Arthur, and I embarked with the brave Marcasse, divided between grief at parting from my only friend, and joy at returning to my only love. The squadron to which I belonged had a stormy passage; and several times I gave up the hope of ever kneeling at Edmée's feet, under the great oaks of Saint Sévère. At last, after a final tempest, which we encountered on the coast of France, I stepped upon the shore of la Bretagne; and falling into the arms of my brave sergeant, who had supported our common misfortunes, if not with more physical force, at least with more moral tranquillity than I had displayed, mingled my tears with his.

XVI.

WE left Brest without sending any letter in advance. As we approached Varenne we alighted, and, sending our post-chaise by the longest road, took a short cut through the forest. When I saw the trees of the park lifting their venerable heads above the underwood, like a solemn assembly of druids amid a prostrate multitude, my heart beat so violently that I had to stop.

"Ah, well!" said Marcasse, turning towards me with a severe air, as if to reproach me for my weakness.

But, an instant afterwards, his own face was equally compromised by an unexpected emotion. A little plaintive squeak, and the grazing of a fox's tail between his legs, made him tremble; and on recognizing Blaireau he uttered a loud cry. The poor animal had scented his master from afar, and had run with the agility of his first youth to roll at our feet. We thought, for a moment, that he was going to die, for he remained motionless and shrunken under the caressing hand of Marcasse; then suddenly he started up, as if struck by an idea worthy of a man, and darted off, with the rapidity of lightning, in the direction of Patience's cottage.

"Yes, go and warn my friend, brave dog!" cried Marcasse. "A better friend than you would be more than a man."

He turned towards me, and I saw two great tears rolling over the cheeks of the impassible hidalgo.

We redoubled our speed until we reached the cottage. It had been wonderfully improved: a pretty rustic garden, strongly and securely fenced by a quick-set hedge, surrounded the little house, while the stony path that had formerly led to it had been replaced by a fine walk, on either side of which magnificent vegetables stretched themselves out in regular lines, like an army in marching order. A battalion of cabbages composed the advance-guard, carrots and salads formed the main body, and, along the hedge, the modest sorrel brought up

the rear. Some fine apple-trees, already well grown, spread their green shade over these plants; pear-trees *en quenouille* alternated with pear-trees *en eventail*, and borders of thyme and sage kissed the feet of sunflowers and gillyflowers, indicating that Patience had adopted ideas of social order and habits of luxury.

This change was so remarkable, that I thought we should no longer find our friend in this abode. I began to feel a still greater anxiety, that changed almost to certainty, when I saw two young men of the village engaged in cutting the trees. Our voyage had lasted more than four months; and it was more than six months since we had heard the Solitary mentioned. But Marcasse felt no fear; Blaireau had told him that Patience was alive, and the tracks of the little dog, freshly marked on the sand of the walk, showed the direction that he had taken. Nevertheless, I was so afraid of seeing the joy of such a day troubled, that I dared not ask the gardeners of Patience a single question, and followed in silence the hidalgo, whose softened eye wandered over this new Eden, while his discreet mouth let fall only a single word, echoed by his own voice, as usual, —

"*Changed — changed!*"

Finally I became impatient. The walk seemed interminable, although in reality it was very short, and I began to run, my heart bounding with emotion.

"Edmée," I said to myself, "is perhaps there."

She was not there, however; and I only heard the voice of the Solitary, who was talking to Blaireau.

"Down, then!" he was saying. "What is the matter with the beast? Has the poor dog gone mad? Down, Blaireau! you should not torment your master so. See what comes from spoiling folks!"

"Blaireau is not mad," I said, entering the cottage; "have you become deaf to the approach of a friend, Master Patience?"

Patience let a pile of money, which he was in the act of counting, fall on the table, and came to meet me with his old cordiality. I embraced him: he seemed surprised and touched at my joy; and then, looking at me

from head to foot, he wondered at the change that had taken place in my appearance. At that moment Marcasse appeared upon the threshold of the door.

Then Patience raised his large hand towards the heavens, and cried, with a sublime expression,—

"The song of Solomon! Now I can die; my eyes have seen him whom I awaited."

The hidalgo said nothing; he raised his hat in his usual manner, and, sitting down in a chair, became pale, and closed his eyes. His dog leaped upon his knees, and expressed his tenderness by trying to utter little cries, which changed into multiplied sneezes (you know he was mute from birth). Trembling with old age and joy, he stretched his pointed nose towards the long nose of his master; but his master did not reply as usual,—"Down, Blaireau!"

Marcasse had fainted.

Happiness had overcome the loving soul of this man, who knew no better than Blaireau did how to express himself in words. Patience ran for a great pitcher of the wine of the country, of the second year: that is to say, the oldest and best possible; he made him swallow a few drops, and its strength revived him. The hidalgo excused his weakness by attributing it to fatigue, and the heat; he would not, or could not, attribute it to its real cause. There are beings who pass away, after reflecting all that is beautiful and grand in the moral universe, without finding the means, and without even feeling the need of manifesting themselves to others.

Patience was as expansive as his friend was reserved; but, when his first transports were calmed, he turned to me:

"Now then, my officer," he said, "I see that you don't want to stop here any longer. You are eager to reach the end of your journey, and your friends, I swear to you, will be amazed and delighted to see you."

We entered the park, and, in crossing it, Patience explained to us the transformation in his abode and way of life.

"As for me, you see that I am not changed," he said;

"my dress and my tastes are the same, and although I served you with wine just now, I myself drink water as usual. And yet I do not deny that I have money, and lands, and workmen — no, indeed! But all that has come about in spite of myself, as you shall hear. About three years ago, Mademoiselle Edmée spoke to me about the trouble she had in dispensing charity judiciously. The abbé was as awkward as she. They were deceived every day; vagabonds took their money and made a bad use of it, while proud and industrious workmen were in want of everything without their being able to find it out. They feared to humiliate the latter by inquiring about their needs; and when vagabonds appealed to them, they preferred to be their dupes rather than make a mistake to the detriment of charity. In this way she spent a great deal of money, and did but little good. I explained to her then that money is the thing which is least necessary to the poor. That which really renders men unhappy, I told her, is not being unable to dress better than others, being unable to go to the tavern on Sunday, and to wear white stockings and red garters at high mass; it is not being unable to say, 'My mare, my cow, my granaries, etc.,' it is being in feeble health when the winter is severe; it is their inability to preserve themselves from cold, heat, sickness, from great thirst and great hunger. I told her not to take me as a specimen of the health and strength of the peasants, but to find out for herself about their maladies; and to see what was wanting in their housekeeping. These people, I said, are not philosophers; they are vain, they love finery, the little they earn they spend in making a show, and they have not the foresight to deprive themselves of a little pleasure so as to lay up something for their great needs. In a word, they do not know how to use money; they tell you they are in debt, and if this is true, it is not true that they employ the money you give them in paying their debts. They do not think of the morrow, they pay the highest interest that their creditors choose to ask, and with your money they buy a hempfield or a piece of furniture, so as to astonish their neighbors and make them jealous. Thus their debts increase

every year, and at the end of the reckoning they are forced to sell hemp-fields and furniture, because their creditor, who is always one of their own class, insists upon being paid, or asks such high interest that they cannot stand it. Everything goes: paying the principal carries off your land; the interest had taken your income long ago; you are old, and can no longer work. Your children abandon you, because you have brought them up badly, and because they have the same passions and vanities that you have; you must take a wallet and go from door to door begging bread, because you are accustomed to bread, and cannot keep yourself alive by eating roots, like the sorcerer Patience, the refuse of nature, whom the world hates and despises because he has not become a beggar.

"The beggar, for the matter of that, I told her, is not more unhappy than the workman,— perhaps he is less so. He has no longer either a good or a foolish pride: he suffers no longer. The people of the country are kind; no wandering mendicant ever wants for a night's lodging and a supper in making his rounds. The peasants load his back with pieces of bread, so that he can feed his poultry and swine, which he leaves in a little hut in the care of a child or an old relative. To this hut he returns every week, and passes two or three days there, in sleeping and counting the pieces of two sous that he has received. This petty sum he often spends in supplying the superfluous wants which idleness engenders. A farmer very seldom uses tobacco; many beggars cannot do without it, and beg for it more eagerly than for bread. Thus the beggar is no more to be pitied than the laborer; but he is corrupt and debauched when he is not wicked and ferocious, which, luckily, is very rare.

"This is what you must do," I said to Edmée; "and the abbé told me that your philosophers say the same thing. Persons who give a great deal in private charities, as you do, must give without consulting the fancies of those who beg, but not without being thoroughly informed of their real wants.

"Edmée objected that she could not obtain this informa

tion ; that she would have to give up all her time to this one object, and to neglect M. le Chevalier, who was getting old, and who could no longer read, or do anything without the aid of his daughter. The abbé, for his part, loved too much to study the books of the learned, to have time for anything else.

"See what all the science of virtue amounts to," I said to her; "it makes you forget to be virtuous.

"'You are right,'" replied Edmée; 'but what shall we do?'

"I promised to think about it, and this is what I contrived: I walked every day in the direction of the cultivated fields, instead of walking, as usual, towards the woods. This cost me a great deal. I love to be alone; and I had avoided men for so many years, that I no longer knew how to deal with them. But no matter, it was a duty, and I did it. I went to the farms, and at first leaning over the hedges, and afterwards, seated in the houses, I inquired, as if for the sake of conversation, about all that I wanted to know. At first the peasants received me like a lost dog in time of drought; and I saw, with a grief which I had great trouble in hiding, hatred and suspicion in all their faces. I had not wished to live with men, but I loved them: I knew that they were unhappy rather than wicked; I had passed all my time in lamenting the wrongs of the people, in being indignant with those who oppressed them; and when, for the first time, I saw the possibility of helping some of them, these very ones shut their doors when they saw me afar off, and their children, — the beautiful children whom I love so much, — hid themselves in the ditches, so as not to have the fever, which I would give them, they said, with a look. Nevertheless, as they knew Edmée's friendship for me, they dared not repulse me openly, and I succeeded in finding out what we had an interest in knowing. She found a remedy for all the misfortunes that I made known to her. One house was dilapidated; and while the young girl of the family was wearing aprons of cotton cloth that cost four livres the ell, the rain was falling upon the bed of the grandmother and the cradle of the

an old man, and was a little angry. To console him, I turned the conversation upon the history of the past which he had known, and questioned him upon many points which could be better elucidated by his experience than by my insight. In this way I gained a true idea of the spirit that should animate personal relations, and fully satisfied his legitimate self-love. Natural generosity and family pride had induced him to adopt me, but he now conceived a friendship for me that was founded on sympathy. He did not conceal from me that his greatest desire, before sinking into an eternal sleep, was to see me become Edmée's husband; nor did he seem surprised when I answered that this was the only thought of my life, the only desire of my soul.

"I know it, I know it," he said; "all depends upon her, and I think she has no longer any cause for hesitation. I do not see," he added, after a moment's silence, and with a little ill-humor, "what she could bring forward at present."

From this remark, the first that had escaped him on the only subject in which I was interested, I saw that he had been favorable to my hopes for a long time, and that the obstacle to them, if any still existed, came from Edmée. My uncle's last observation implied a doubt that I dared not seek to dissipate, and which caused me great anxiety. Edmée's sensitive pride inspired me with so much fear, her ineffable goodness filled me with such respect, that I dared not ask her openly to decide my fate. I adopted the plan of acting as if I had entertained no other hope than that of remaining always her brother and friend.

An event, which for some time remained inexplicable, caused, for several days, a diversion in my thoughts. On first arriving, I had refused to go and take possession of la Roche Mauprat; nor did I yield this point until forced to do so by my uncle's urgency.

"You must absolutely go," the good old man said, "and see the improvements that I have made in your domain; the fields that have been brought into a good state of cultivation, and the advantageous cattle-leases that I have arranged on each of your farms. In

a word, you must acquaint yourself thoroughly with your affairs, and show your peasants that you are interested in their labors; otherwise, after my death everything will go from bad to worse, and you will be obliged to lease your estate; and this, although it may bring you in a larger income, will diminish its real value. I am too old now to oversee your property. For two years I have not escaped from this miserable *robe de chambre.* The abbé doesn't understand business; Edmée has an excellent head, but she cannot make up her mind to go to that place; she says she was too much frightened there, which is nothing but childishness."

"I feel that I ought to show more courage," I replied; "and nevertheless, my good uncle, you are ordering me to undertake the most painful task in the world. I have not put my foot on that cursed soil since the day that I left it, rescuing Edmée from her jailers. It seems to me that you are driving me from heaven, and sending me to visit hell."

The chevalier shrugged his shoulders; the abbé begged me to humor him. My resistance caused my uncle real annoyance. I submitted, and resolving to conquer my self, took leave of Edmée for two days. The abbé wanted to accompany me, so as to distract my mind from the sad thoughts that might assail me, but I felt scrupulous about separating him from Edmée, for however short a time. I knew how necessary he was to her. Confined as she was to her father's side, her life was so serious, so retired, that the slightest event seemed important. Each year had increased her isolation, and it had become almost complete since her father's weakness had banished from his table songs and merry stories,—the joyous children of wine. He had been a great hunter; and as his birthday occurred on the anniversary of Saint Hubert, he had formerly gathered about him, at that time, all the nobility of the country. For many a year the courts of the chateau had resounded with the baying of the hounds; for many a year the stables had held in their shining s two long files of spirited horses; for many a year the s of the horn had resounded through the woods of the n

borhood, or had struck up the fanfare under the windows of the great dining-hall, at every toast of the brilliant company. But those happy days had long since departed; the chevalier could no longer hunt, and the hope of obtaining his daughter's hand no longer drew about him the young noblemen, who had grown weary of his old age, his attacks of gout, and the stories which he repeated in the evening, forgetting that he had already told them in the morning. Edmée's obstinacy in refusing and dismissing M. de la Marche had caused much surprise, and had given rise to many curious inquiries. One young man, who was in love with her, and whom she dismissed as she did all her suitors, driven by a foolish and base pride to seek to be revenged upon the only woman of his class who, according to him, would have dared refuse him, discovered that Edmée had been captured by the Coupe-Jarrets, and spread the report that she had passed a night of orgie at la Roche Mauprat. It was a great deal if he condescended to say that she had yielded only to violence. Edmée was regarded with too much respect and esteem to be accused of having yielded to the brigands of her own accord, but it soon began to be reported that she had been the victim of their brutality. For this reason, she was no longer sought by any one. My absence only served to confirm this belief. I had saved her from death, it was said, but not from shame, and I could not make her my wife; I was in love with her, and fled, so as not to yield to the temptation of marrying her. All this seemed so probable, that it would have been difficult to make the public accept the true version of the affair; and so much the more, as Edmée had refused to put an end to these disgraceful reports by giving her hand to a man whom she could not love. These were the real causes of her isolation, although I did not learn about them until later. But, seeing the austerity of the chevalier's household, and the melancholy serenity of Edmée, I feared to let a dry leaf fall upon this sleeping wave, and I implored the abbé to remain with her until my return. I took no one with me excepting Marcasse, whom Edmée had been unwilling to have separated from me, and who was now

sharing the elegant cottage and administrative life of Patience.

I arrived at la Roche Mauprat on a foggy evening in the early autumn: the sun was veiled; all nature was sleeping in silence and in fog; the plains were deserted; the air alone, darkened with a multitude of passenger-birds, was full of movement and noise; flocks of cranes formed gigantic triangles in the heavens, and storks, flying at an immeasurable height, filled the clouds with melancholy cries, that floated over the saddened country like the funereal chant of the beautiful summer days. For the first time in the year I was sensible of a chill in the atmosphere, and I imagine that all men feel an instinctive sadness at the approach of the rigorous season. There is something in a first frost which reminds him forcibly of his own approaching dissolution.

My companion and myself had crossed the woods and heaths without speaking a single word, and had made a long détour, to avoid Gazeau Tower, which I did not feel strength to behold. The sun was setting in a gray mist when we crossed the portcullis of la Roche Mauprat. This portcullis was broken; the drawbridge was never raised, and afforded a passage only to peaceful troops, and their careless shepherds. The ditches were half filled, and already osier beds extended their flexible branches over the shallow waters; nettles were growing at the foot of the fallen towers, and the traces of the fire still seemed fresh upon the walls. The farm-buildings had all been restored; and the farm-yard, full of cattle, poultry, children, shepherds' dogs, and agricultural implements, formed a striking contrast to the gloomy outer walls, where I imagined that I could still see the red flames of the besiegers mounting to the sky, and the black blood of the Mauprats flowing to the earth.

I was received with the tranquil and somewhat cold courtesy which is characteristic of the peasants of Berry. They did not try to please me, but they did not let me want for anything. I was introduced into the only one of the old buildings which had not been damaged during the siege of the donjon, or abandoned since that time to

decay. It was a detached pile, whose massive architecture dated back to the tenth century; the doors were smaller than the windows, and the windows themselves gave so little light, that we had to light torches to enter it, although the sun had scarcely set. This building had been restored provisionally to serve as a foothold for the new seigneur or his agents. My uncle Hubert, as long as his strength allowed, had often come here to watch over my interests, and they conducted me to the chamber that he had reserved for himself, and which, since that time, had been called the master's chamber. They had carried thither all the best of the old furniture that had been saved from the fire; and as it was damp and cold, in spite of the care they had taken to make it habitable, the servant of the farm preceded me, with a torch in one hand and a faggot in the other.

Blinded by the cloud of smoke which she whirled around her, deceived by the new door opening into a different part of the court, and by the absence of certain corridors that had been walled up to dispense with keeping them in repair, I reached this chamber without recognizing anything; I could not even have told in what part of the old building I was, the new aspect of the court had so completely misled my recollections, my troubled and gloomy soul was so little struck by outward things.

While the fire was lighting I threw myself into a chair, and, hiding my head in my hands, abandoned myself to gloomy reveries. And yet this situation was not without a charm, so naturally does the past clothe itself in beautified or softened forms in the brain of the young—presumptuous masters of the future. When, by dint of blowing upon her torch, the servant had filled the chamber with a thick smoke, she went out to get some live coals, and left me alone. Marcasse had stopped in the stable to look after our horses. Blaireau had followed me; stretched before the hearth, he looked at me from time to time with a discontented air, as if to ask the reason of such a bad lodging, and such a poor fire.

Suddenly, casting my eyes around me, it seemed to me that my memory awakened. The fire, after making the

green wood hiss and crackle, sent a jet of flame up the chimney, and the whole room was illumined by a brilliant but agitated light, that gave everything a doubtful and fantastic appearance. Blaireau got up, turned his back to the fire, and crouched between my legs, as if he were waiting something strange and unexpected.

I now saw that this room was no other than the bedchamber of my grandfather Tristan, occupied after his death, for several years, by his oldest son, the detestable Jean, my most cruel oppressor, the most crafty and dastardly of the Coupe-Jarrets. With terror and disgust I recognized the furniture, and the very bed, with its rusty posts, upon which my grandfather had rendered to God his guilty soul in the torments of a slow agony. The arm-chair in which I was seated was the one in which Jean *le Tors* (as he took pleasure in calling himself in his facetious days) had sat to meditate his wicked deeds, or pronounce his odious sentences. A strange horror came over me, and in imagination I beheld the spectres of all the Mauprats, with their bloody hands, and eyes bleared with wine. Starting up, and yielding to the horror that I felt, I was about to take flight, when, suddenly, I saw standing before me a figure so distinct, so lifelike, so distinguished by every appearance of reality from the phantoms by which I had just been beset, that I fell back in my chair bathed in a cold sweat. Jean Mauprat was standing by the bed. Apparently he had just gotten out of it, for he was still holding the curtains partly open. He looked as of old, excepting that he had grown thinner, paler, and more hideous; his head was shaved, and his body was enveloped in a winding-sheet of a sombre hue. He cast an infernal glance upon me; a malignant and scornful smile contorted his thin and withered lips. He stood motionless, his sparkling eyes fastened upon mine, and seemed about to speak. I was convinced, at this instant, that what I saw was a living being, a man of flesh and blood; it is inconceivable, therefore, that I should have been frozen by a childish terror. But I should deny it in vain, and never afterwards could I explain it to myself, — I was enchained by fear. His

glance petrified me,— my tongue was paralyzed. Blaireau sprang upon him; then, lifting his arm, he agitated the folds of his lugubrious garment, resembling a shroud soiled by the humidity of the sepulchre, and I fainted.

When I came to myself Marcasse was standing by my side, trying anxiously to lift me up. I was stretched on the floor, stiff as a corpse. I had a great deal of trouble in collecting my ideas; but, as soon as I could stand upon my legs, I seized Marcasse by the body, and dragged him precipitately out of that cursed chamber. I came very near falling, several times, in going down the spiral staircase; and it was only on breathing in the court the evening air, and smelling the healthy odor of the stables, that I recovered the use of my reason.

I did not hesitate to attribute what had just passed to an hallucination of the brain. I had proved my courage during the war, in the presence of my brave sergeant; and, before him, I did not blush to acknowledge the truth. I answered his questions sincerely, and painted my horrible vision with so many details, that it struck him also as a real thing; and he repeated several times, with a pensive air, as we walked together through the court, —

"Singular — singular! Astonishing!"

"No, it is not astonishing," I said, when I had quite recovered. "I felt the most melancholy presentiment in coming here; for several days I have been struggling to overcome my repugnance to seeing la Roche Mauprat again. Last night I had the nightmare; and I awoke so fatigued and sad, that, if I had not feared showing my unwillingness to my uncle, I should again have deferred this disagreeable visit. As we entered I felt cold; my breast was oppressed, — I could not breathe. Perhaps, also, the thick smoke with which the chamber was filled troubled my brain. In a word, after the fatigues and perils of our unfortunate voyage, from which we neither of us have altogether recovered, is it strange that I should have experienced a nervous crisis at my very first painful emotion?"

"Tell me," replied Marcasse, still thoughtful and pensive, "did you notice Blaireau at that moment? What did Blaireau do?"

"I thought that I saw Blaireau spring upon the phantom as it disappeared; but I must have dreamed that, like all the rest."

"Hum!" said the sergeant; "when I entered, Blaireau was all on fire. He came to you, smelled, wept, in his way, went to the side of the bed, scratched the wall, came to me, went to you. Singular, that! Astonishing, captain! astonishing, that!"

I made no answer, and Marcasse continued, thoughtfully,—

"No ghosts! never ghosts; besides, why dead, Jean? Not dead! Two Mauprats still. Who knows? Where the devil? No ghosts, and my master a fool? Never. Sick? No."

After this colloquy the sergeant obtained a light, drew his inseparable sword from its scabbard, whistled to Blaireau, and bravely seizing the rope that served as a balustrade for the staircase, urged me to remain below. Whatever my repugnance to returning to this chamber may have been, I did not hesitate to follow him, however, and our first care was to visit the bed; but while we had been talking in the court the servant had changed the linen, and she had just finished smoothing the counter pane.

"Who has been sleeping here?" said Marcasse, with his usual prudence.

"No one," she answered, "excepting M. le Chevalier, or M. l'abbé Aubert, when they came here."

"But to-day or yesterday, for example?" rejoined Marcasse.

"Oh, yesterday or to-day! no one, monsieur; it is two years since M. le Chevalier has been here, and as for M. l'Abbé, he never sleeps here since he has come alone. He comes in the morning, breakfasts with us, and returns in the evening."

"But the bed was in disorder," said Marcasse, looking at her suspiciously.

"The deuce, monsieur!" she answered; "that may be, I don't know how it was left the last time any one slept in it; I only thought of putting on the sheets; all that I know is, that M. Bernard's cloak was on it."

"My cloak?" I cried. "It is down in the stable"

"And mine also," said Marcasse; "I just rolled them together, and put them on a box of oats."

"Then you must have two," replied the servant; "for it is certain that I took one from the bed,— a black cloak, not very new."

"Mine is lined with red, and trimmed with gold lace; that of Marcasse is a light gray. It was neither of our cloaks, therefore, that you found; they were only brought here for a moment, and were carried back to the stable by the boy."

"But where have you put it?" said Marcasse.

"My faith, monsieur, I put it there on the arm-chair," answered the girl; "you must have taken it while I went to look for the candle, for I don't see it any longer."

We searched the room, but the cloak was not to be found. We pretended to want it, not denying that it was ours. The servant undid the bed, turned the mattress in our presence, and went to ask the boy what he had done with it. Nothing was found, either in the bed or in the room; the boy had not returned since he had gone down stairs. The whole farm was in commotion, fearing that some one would be accused of theft. We asked whether a stranger had not come to la Roche Mauprat, and was not still there; but this they denied promptly. When we were convinced that nobody had been lodging with these honest people, or had been seen by them, we reassured them about the lost cloak by telling them that Marcasse had rolled it up by mistake, with the two others. Then we shut ourselves up in the room, so as to explore it at our ease; for it was now pretty evident that it was not a spectre that I had seen, but Jean Mauprat himself, or a man who resembled him, and whom I had taken for him.

Marcasse, having excited Blaireau by his voice and gestures, observed all his movements.

"Be easy," he said to me proudly; "the old dog has not forgotten the old trade; if there is a hole, a hole only as large as your hand, have no fear.— After him, old dog! — Have no fear!"

Blaireau, in fact, after smelling everywhere, persisted in

scratching the wall near the spot where I had seen the apparition. He trembled whenever his pointed nose encountered a certain part of the wall, and, wagging his fox's tail with a satisfied air, returned to his master's side, seeming to tell him to fix his attention there. The sergeant immediately began his examination, and tried to insert his sword into some crevice; but nothing gave way. Nevertheless, a skilfully-fashioned sliding-door may have been there, concealed by the ornaments of the sculptured wainscoting. In that case it would be necessary to find the spring which moved the sliding-door, but this proved impossible, although we tried hard to do so for two long hours. We tried in vain to move the panel: it emitted the same sound as the others; all were sonorous, indicating that the wainscoting did not rest directly upon the brickwork, but it could only have been separated from it by a line. Finally, Marcasse, bathed in sweat, stopped and said,—

"We have lost our senses; although we search until to-morrow, we will not find a spring if there is none; and although we pound all night, we will not force the door, if it has two great iron bars behind it, like secret doors that I have seen in other old manors."

"We can find the opening," I said, "if one exists, with the help of an axe; but why, simply because your dog scratches the wall, do you persist in believing that Jean Mauprat, or the man who resembles him, did not enter and go out by the door?"

"Enter, as much as you please," replied Marcasse, "but go out!—No, on my honor! When the servant went down stairs I was on the staircase, brushing my shoes; at once I heard something fall in here, I took three steps, — that was all, — and I was with you. You stretched on the floor in a dead faint; no one within or without, on my honor."

"In that case I dreamed of my devil of an uncle, and the servant dreamed of a black cloak; for, to a certainty, there is no secret door here; and even if there were one, and if all the Mauprats, living and dead, have the key of it, what is that to us? Do we belong to the police, that

we should search out these wretches? If we should find them hidden somewhere would we not help them to escape, rather than deliver them up to justice? We are armed; we do not fear that they will assassinate us to-night; and if they amuse themselves again by trying to frighten us, so much the worse for them! I know neither relatives nor allies when I am awakened suddenly. Go, therefore, and order the good people of the farm to serve the omelette which they are preparing for us; for if we continue to knock and scratch the walls at this rate, they will think us crazy."

Marcasse did as I requested out of obedience, but he was not convinced. He seemed to attach a strange importance to the discovery of this mystery, and to be tormented by an undefined anxiety, for he was unwilling to leave me alone in the enchanted chamber. He pretended that I might once more be taken ill, and fall into convulsions.

"Oh! this time," I said, "I shall not be such a coward. The cloak has cured me of my fear of ghosts, and I advise no one to meddle with me."

The hidalgo was forced to leave me. I loaded my pistols, and placed them within reach upon the table, but all my precautions were thrown away; nothing troubled the silence of the chamber; and the heavy curtains of red silk, with our coat of arms stamped upon their corners, in blackened silver, were not disturbed by the least breath. Marcasse returned; and delighted to find me as cheerful as he had left me, he prepared our supper with as much care as if we had come to la Roche Mauprat for the sole purpose of making a good meal. He joked merrily about the chicken still singing on the spit, and the weak, sour wine, like a brush in the throat. Soon the farmer increased his good humor by bringing us several bottles of Madeira, which my uncle had given him in former days, and of which he liked to drink a glass or two when he mounted on horseback. To reward him we invited the worthy man to sup with us, so that we might talk about business with as little annoyance as possible.

"Ay, ay," he said, "it will be then as it was formerly; the peasants will eat at the table of the seigneurs of la

Roche Mauprat. You keep up the old custom, Monsieur Bernard, and you do well."

"Yes, monsieur," I replied very coldly, "but I invite those to my table who owe me money, and not those to whom I am in debt."

This reply, and the word monsieur, frightened him so, that he made a great ado about sitting at the table; but I insisted, for I wanted to make him understand me at at once. I treated him like a man whom I was elevating to my standard, and not like one to whom I lowered myself. I forced him to be chaste in his jokes, but allowed him, within proper limits, to be gay and demonstrative. He was a frank and honest man. I watched him closely to see whether he had any acquaintance with the phantom who left his cloak trailing behind him upon beds, but this was not at all probable; and I found that he had such an aversion for the Coupe-Jarrets, that, but for his respect for my relationship, he would have berated them with all his heart in my presence, according to their deserts. I did not allow him to take any liberties upon this subject, and I required him to give me an account of my affairs, which he did with intelligence, exactitude, and loyalty.

When he got up to go I noticed, for the first time, that he was under the influence of the Madeira: his legs trembled, and he stumbled over the furniture, and yet he had sufficient self-control to talk sensible. I have always remarked that wine acts much more upon the muscles of the peasants, than upon their nerves; that they seldom lose their senses, and that stimulants, on the contrary, throw them into a state of beatitude that we are far enough from experiencing; their intoxication is a very different pleasure from ours, and is very superior to our feverish exaltation.

Marcasse and I were not intoxicated; but, when alone, we perceived that the wine had inspired us with a gayety and indifference which, but for its stimulating influence, we should not have felt at la Roche Mauprat, even without the adventure of the phantom. Accustomed to speak with mutual frankness, we made this observation, and agreed that we were much better disposed now, than

before supper, to receive all the *loup-garous* of Varenne.

This word *loup-garou* recalled to my mind the adventure that had brought me into inimical relations with Patience, when I was thirteen years old. Marcasse knew about it, but he did not know what my character was at that time, and I amused him by describing my wild flight across the fields, after I had been flogged by the sorcerer.

"What I suffered then," I said, in concluding my story, "makes me think that my imagination can be very easily excited, and that I am not inaccessible to the fear of supernatural things. Thus the phantom of a little while ago —"

"No matter, no matter," said Marcasse, examining the priming of my pistols, and putting them on my night-table; "do not forget that all the Coupe-Jarrets are not dead; and that Jean, if still in this world, is still to be feared; he will do evil until he is buried, and fastened down with a triple bolt in the lowest hell."

Wine had loosened the tongue of the hidalgo, who, on the rare occasions when he allowed himself to violate his habitual sobriety, showed that he did not lack intellect. Not wishing to leave me, he made his bed by the side of mine. My nerves were excited by the emotions of the day; and almost unconsciously I began to talk of Edmée, not in a way that would have deserved the shadow of a reproach from her, if she had heard my words, and yet more confidentially than I should have allowed myself to do with a man who was still merely my subordinate, and not my friend, as he afterwards became. I don't know positively what I told him of my sorrows, my hopes, and my anxieties, but, at all events, these disclosures had a terrible effect, as you will soon see. We fell asleep while talking. Blaireau was at his master's feet; his sword lay crosswise by the side of the dog, and over the knees of the hidalgo; the light was between us; my pistols were within reach of my arm, my hunting-knife was under my pillow, and the bolts were drawn. Nothing troubled our repose; and, when the sun awakened us,

the cocks were crowing joyously in the court, and the cow-herds were exchanging their rustic jokes, while yoking their oxen, under our window.

"It does not matter, there is something in it!"

These were the first words that Marcasse uttered as he opened his eyes, and resumed the conversation where we had left it on the previous evening.

"Did you see anything in the night?" I asked.

"Nothing at all," he answered; "but it amounts to the same thing: Blaireau did not sleep well; my sword has fallen to the floor; and then nothing that happened here has been explained."

"Explain it who will," I answered, "I certainly shall not trouble myself any further with the affair."

"Wrong, wrong, you are wrong!"

"That may be, my good sergeant, but I do not like this room at all; and it looks so hideous to me by broad daylight, that I shall have to leave it far behind me before I can feel that I am breathing pure air."

"Ah, well, I will follow you, but I shall return. Such things must not be left to chance. I know what Jean Mauprat is capable of, — you do not."

"I do not wish to know; and if there is any danger here for me or mine, I do not wish you to return."

Marcasse shook his head, and made no reply. We made another tour of the farm before departing. Marcasse was very much struck with one thing, which I should not have noticed. The farmer wanted to present his wife to me; but she was unwilling to see me, and hid in the hemp-field to avoid doing so. I attributed this timidity to the shyness of youth.

"Beautiful youth, my faith!" said Marcasse; "a youth like mine, — fifty years and more! There is something in it — something in it, I tell you."

"And what the devil is it?"

"Hum! In her time she was on very good terms with Jean Mauprat. She found that crooked fellow to her liking. I know so much, at least; and I know many other things — many things, you may be sure."

"You can give me an account of them when we return

here," I replied, "and that will not be very soon; for my affairs will get on much better if I do not meddle with them, and I do not choose to fall into the habit of drinking Madeira to keep from being afraid of my shadow. If you want to oblige me, Marcasse, you will tell nobody what has happened. Every one has not the same respect for your captain that you have."

"He who does not respect my captain is a fool," replied the hidalgo, in a dictatorial tone; "but, if you order it, I will say nothing."

He kept his word. Nothing in the world would have induced me to allow Edmée to be disturbed by this stupid story. But I could not prevent Marcasse from carrying out his project: early in the morning he had disappeared; and I learned from Patience that he had returned to la Roche Mauprat, under the pretext of having forgotten something.

XVIII.

WHILE Marcasse was engaged in these serious investigations, I was passing, by Edmée's side, days full of delight and agony. Firm, devoted, but, in many respects, reserved, her conduct threw me continually into alternate paroxysms of joy and grief.

One day the chevalier had a long conversation with her while I was walking. They were talking with great animation as I entered, and my uncle immediately called me.

"Approach!" he cried. "Come and tell Edmée that you love her, — that you will make her happy, — that you have corrected your old faults. Take proper measures to come to an understanding; for this uncertainty must end. Our position before the world is not tenable; and I would not sink into the tomb without seeing the honor of my daughter vindicated, and being sure that some foolish caprice upon her part will not throw her into a convent, instead of leaving her to occupy in the world the rank which belongs to her, and which I have

labored all my life to assure her. Come, Bernard, fall at her feet! Have the sense to say something that will persuade her! or indeed I shall believe, — God pardon me! — that it is you who do not love her, and who do not sincerely desire to marry her."

"I! Just Heaven!" I cried. "Not desire it! when I have had no other thought for seven years, — when my heart has no other wish, and my mind can conceive no other happiness!"

I said everything to Edmée that the most exalted passion could suggest. She listened in silence, and without withdrawing her hands, which I covered with kisses; but her face was grave, and the tone of her voice made me tremble when she said, after reflecting for a moment, —

"My father should never doubt my word; I have promised to marry Bernard, — I have given my promise to Bernard and to my father; it is certain, then, that I will marry him." After another pause she added, in a still more serious tone, "But if my father believes that he is about to die, what does he suppose I am made of, that he urges me to think only of myself, and to put on my bridal dress at the hour of his funeral? If, on the contrary, as I believe, he is still strong in spite of his sufferings, and called upon to enjoy for long years the love of his family, why is it that he urges me so imperiously to shorten the time of delay that I have asked him for? A life-long engagement, and one which will decide, I do not say my happiness, — that I would willingly sacrifice at my father's least wish, — but the peace of my conscience and dignity of my conduct (for what woman can be sufficiently sure of herself to answer for a future to which she is fettered against her will), is not this a thing of sufficient importance to demand reflection? Does not such an engagement deserve that I should weigh all its risks and all its advantages for several years, at least?"

"Merciful heavens!" cried the chevalier; "you have passed seven years already in weighing them. You ought to know what your purpose is in regard to your

cousin. If you want to marry him, marry him; if you do not, in God's name! say so, and let some one else come forward."

"My father," replied Edmée, a little coldly, "I shall never marry any one excepting Bernard."

"That is all very well," said the chevalier, pushing about the faggots with the tongs; "but it is not saying certainly that you will ever marry at all."

"I have told you otherwise," replied Edmée. "I should have liked a few months' more liberty; but, since you are discontented with all these delays, I am ready to obey your commands, as you know."

"The devil! That is a pretty way of giving your consent," cried my uncle, "and very delightful for your cousin! My faith! Bernard, I am very old; but I can say truly that I do not comprehend anything about women yet, and it is probable that I shall die without doing so."

"My uncle," I said, "I understand my cousin's estrangement perfectly well; I have deserved it. I have done all that was in my power to repair my crimes; but it depends upon her to forget the past, and undoubtedly she has suffered too much to do so. For the rest, if she does not pardon me, I will imitate her severity — I will not pardon myself; renouncing all hope in this world, I will go far away from her and you, to punish myself by a chastisement worse than death."

"Now then, now it is all broken off!" said my uncle, throwing the tongs into the fire; "and this — this is what you wanted, my daughter."

I had turned away, and was going out; I was suffering horribly. Edmée ran after me, and taking me by the arm, brought me back to her father.

"What you say is cruel and ungrateful," she said; "does it show a modest and generous character to deny the friendship, the devotion, I dare not use another word, the fidelity of seven years, because I ask you to submit to a few months' more probation? And even if I should never, Bernard, feel as ardent an affection for you as you do for me, is the love I have shown you hitherto so insignificant that you despise it, and would reject it in anger

because you cannot inspire me with precisely the sentiment which you think you have a right to claim? Do you know that you would deprive me, at this rate, of all the joys of friendship? In a word, do you want to punish me for having sent you from me for your good, like a mother, or to reward me only on condition of my becoming your slave?"

"No, Edmée, no!" I replied, my heart oppressed and my eyes full of tears, while I carried her hand to my lips; "I feel that you have done more for me than I deserve — I feel that I should seek in vain to quit your presence; but can you find fault with me because I suffer near you? If this is a crime, it is at least a crime so involuntary and so unavoidable, that it will escape alike from your reproaches and from my remorse. Do not speak of it — never speak of it again; this is all that I can say. Let me keep your friendship; I hope that I shall always be worthy of it in the future."

"Embrace each other, and never separate," said the chevalier, deeply moved. "Bernard, whatever Edmée's caprice may be, do not abandon her, if you wish to deserve the blessing of your adopted father. If you cannot become her husband, always remain her brother. Think, my child, that she will soon be alone in the world, and that I shall die wretched if I cannot carry with me into the tomb the certainty that she will have a guardian and protector. Think, finally, that it is upon your account, on account of an oath, contrary to her inclination, perhaps, although her conscience respects it, that she is thus abandoned — calumniated."

The chevalier melted into tears, and all the sorrows of this unfortunate family were instantly revealed to me.

"Enough! enough!" I cried, falling at their feet; "all this is too cruel. I should be the basest of wretches if I needed to be reminded of my faults and duties. Let me weep at your feet; let me expiate by my eternal sorrow, by the eternal renunciation of my life, the evil that I have done! Why did you not drive me away when I first injured you? Why, my uncle, did you not shoot me, like a wild beast? What had I done to be spared — I who

repay your goodness by disgracing you? No, no! Edmée must not marry me, — I feel it; by doing so she would seem to acknowledge that there was some foundation for the insults which I have brought upon her. For my part, I will remain here; if she chooses, I will never see her, but I will sleep at her door, like a faithful dog, and if any one enters her presence disrespectfully, I will tear him into pieces; and, if some day an honest man, happier than I, proves worthy of her love, far from opposing him, I will resign into his keeping the dear and sacred task of protecting and defending her; I will be her friend, her brother; and, when I see them happy together, I will go and die in peace, far from them."

My sobs stifled me; the chevalier pressed his daughter and me to his heart, and we mingled our tears, swearing that we would never separate, either during his life or after his death.

"You must not despair of marrying her, in spite of all," the chevalier said to me, in a low voice, when, after several moments, calmness had been restored; "she has strange caprices, but nothing can persuade me that she does not love you. She does not want to explain herself yet. What woman wills, God wills."

"What Edmée wills, I will," I replied.

Several days after this scene, which put an end to my feverish agitations, and filled my soul with a tranquillity like that of death, I was walking in the park with the abbé.

"I must tell you," he said, "an adventure that happened to me yesterday, and which is rather romantic. I had been walking in the wood of Briantes, and had gone down to the fountain of Fougères. You know that it was as warm as summer; our beautiful plants, glowing in their autumnal tints, are lovelier than ever by the brook, which they cover with their long branches. The woods do not give much shade, but the foot treads on a carpet of dry leaves, the noise of which is delightful to me! The satin-smooth trunks of the birch-trees and young oaks are covered with moss and parasitic plants, delicately displaying their brown tints, mixed with tender

green, red, and fawn, in star patterns, in rosettes, and in all sorts of diagrams, out of which the imagination can construct new worlds in miniature. I studied with enthusiasm these marvels of grace and delicacy, these arabesques, in which an infinite variety is allied to an unalterable regularity; and happy in knowing that you are not blind, like common people, to these adorable coquetries of nature, I gathered some of them with the utmost care, removing even the bark of the tree in which they had taken root, so as not to destroy the purity of their designs. I made a little collection, which we will go and see, if you choose, at the house of Patience, where I left it. On the way I will tell you what happened as I approached the fountain. My head was bent, and I walked over the damp pebbles, guided by the murmur of the clear and delicate jet leaping from the bosom of the mossy rock. I was about to sit down on the stone forming a natural bench by the fountain, when I saw that the place was occupied by a good monk, whose pale and withered face was half hidden by a coarse dark cowl. He seemed very much frightened at meeting me. I reassured him, as well as I could, by telling him that I did not intend to disturb him, but had merely come to wet my lips at the bark trench which the woodmen have fitted to the rock, so as to drink more easily.

"'Oh holy father!'" he said, in the most humble tone, 'why are you not the prophet whose rod strikes the fountain of grace? and my soul, like this rock, why can it not pour forth a fountain of tears?'

"Struck with the monk's manner of expressing himself, with his sadness and his dreamy attitude, in this poetic place, where I had so often pondered over the conversation of the Samaritan with the Saviour, I was drawn into a conversation that became more and more sympathetic. I learned from the monk that he was a Trappist, and was making a journey to perform a penance.

"'Do not ask me either my name or my country,'" he said; 'I belong to an illustrious family, who, if they knew that I was still alive, would blush with shame. Moreover, when we enter the order of la Trappe, we abjure all

pride in the past, and become like new-born infants; we die to the world, to live again in Jesus Christ. But be sure that you see in me one of the most striking examples of the miracles of grace; if I could give you the history of my religious life, my terrors, my remorse, my expiations, I am sure that you would be touched. But how can the compassion and indulgence of men help me, if the mercy of God does not deign to absolve me?'

"You know," continued the abbé, "that I do not like monks,— that I distrust their humility, and have a horror of their laziness; but this one spoke in a manner so sad and affecting, he was so penetrated by a sense of duty, he seemed so ill, so emaciated with austerities, and so full of remorse, that he gained my heart. Lightnings of inspiration flashed in his glance and illumined his discourse, revealing a great intellect, an indefatigable activity, a perseverance proof against all things. We passed two long hours together; and I left him so moved, that I felt a desire to see him again before his departure. He was lodging for the night at the farm of the Goulets, and I could not persuade him to accompany me to the chateau. He was travelling with a companion, he told me, whom he could not leave.

"'But, since you are so charitable,' he said, 'I shall deem it a privilege to meet you here to-morrow at sunset; perhaps I may even be sufficiently emboldened to ask a favor of you: you could be useful to me in an important affair with which I am charged in this country. I cannot tell you more about it at present.'

"I assured him that he could rely upon me, and that it would afford me pleasure to oblige such a man."

"And you are now awaiting with impatience, I presume, the hour for your interview," I said to the abbé.

"Assuredly," he replied; "and I feel such an attraction for my new acquaintance, that, had I not feared betraying his confidence, I should have taken Edmée to the fountain of Fougères."

"Edmée can employ herself much better, I imagine," I replied, "than in listening to the declamations of your monk, who perhaps, after all, is only an intrigant, like so

many others upon whom you have bestowed charity blindly. Pardon me, my good abbé, but you are not much of a physiologist, and you are a little inclined to allow yourself to be prejudiced for or against people, according to the timid or benevolent mood of your romantic mind."

The abbé smiled, pretended that I spoke thus out of malice, insisted upon the piety of the Trappist, and relapsed into botany. We passed some time in herborizing with Patience; and, as I was only seeking to forget myself, I left the cottage with the abbé, and accompanied him to the wood where he had made his appointment. As we approached it, he seemed to recover a little from his infatuation of the previous evening, and to fear that he had gone too far. This uncertainty, so quickly succeeding his enthusiasm, was so thoroughly in keeping with his character, mobile, loving, and timid,— a singular mixture of the most opposite qualities, — that I began to rally him again with all the freedom of friendship.

"Come," he said at last, "you must see him and judge for me. You can look at him, study his face for a few moments, and then leave us alone together, since I have promised to hear what he has to communicate."

I followed the abbé out of idleness; but, as we were passing over the thickly-shaded rocks from which the fountain flows, I paused to look at the monk through the branches of a grove of mountain ash. Seated immediately beneath us at the edge of the fountain, he was watching the corner of the path which we would have to turn to reach him; but he did not think of looking above where we were, so that we could see him at our ease without being seen.

Scarcely had I caught a glimpse of him, when, suppressing a bitter laugh, I seized the abbé by the arm, and drew him some distance off, saying as I did so, not without great agitation,—

"My dear abbé, did you never, in former years, chance to meet my uncle Jean de Mauprat?"

"Never that I know of," replied the abbé, quite confounded, "but why do you ask?"

"To tell you, my friend, that you have made a fine discovery, and that this good and venerable Trappist, in whom you find so much grace, candor, compunction, and intellect, is no other than Jean de Mauprat, the Coupe-Jarret!"

"You have lost your senses!" cried the abbé, starting back. "Jean Mauprat has been dead this long while."

"Jean Mauprat is not dead, nor Antoine Mauprat either, perhaps, and I am less surprised than you, because I have already seen one of these two ghosts. It is possible that Jean Mauprat has become a monk, and weeps over his sins; but it is not by any means impossible that he has come here in disguise to carry out some wicked scheme, and I warn you to be on your guard —"

The abbé interrupted me; he was so frightened that he did not want to go to the rendezvous. I proved to him that he must do so, in order to find out what the old sinner was after; but, knowing the weakness of the abbé, and fearing that my uncle Jean would succeed in making him take some false step, and in entangling his conscience with his hypocritical confessions, I did not hesitate to slip into the thicket, so that I could see and hear everything.

Things did not go, however, as I had thought they would. The Trappist, instead of playing a subtler game, revealed, immediately, his true name. Touched by repentance, and believing that his conscience would not allow him to avoid punishment under the protection of his monk's frock (he had really been a Trappist for several years), he declared that he had come to give himself up to justice, so as to expiate in a startling manner the crimes by which he was polluted. This man, endowed originally with superior faculties, had acquired, in the cloister, a mystic eloquence. He spoke with so much grace and sweetness, that for a moment I was as much duped as the abbé. It was in vain that the latter tried to oppose a resolution that he regarded as insane; Jean de Mauprat showed the most fearless devotion to his religious ideas. He asserted that, having committed the crimes of the ancient barbarous heathens, he could only save his

soul by performing a public penance worthy of the early Christians.

"It is possible," he said, "to be cowardly towards God as well as towards men; and, in the silence of my vigils, I hear a terrible voice which replies to my sobs, 'Miserable coward, it is the fear of man that has thrown you into the bosom of God; had you not feared temporal death, you would never have thought of eternal life.' Then I feel that what I fear the most is, not the anger of God, but the rope and executioner that await me among mankind. Very well: it is time to put an end to my shame before the tribunal of my conscience; and it is only when men load me with opprobrium, and lead me to the scaffold, that I shall consider myself absolved and vindicated in the face of Heaven. It is then only that I shall feel worthy to say to Jesus my Saviour, 'Hear me, innocent Victim, Thou who didst not refuse to hear the good thief; listen to the victim, polluted but repentant, associated in the glory of Thy martyrdom, and purchased by Thy blood.'"

"In case you persist in this enthusiastic determination," said the abbé, after bringing forward all possible objections to his plan, "will you tell me, at least, in what it was that you thought I would consent to assist you?"

"I cannot act in this matter," answered the Trappist, "without the consent of a man who will soon be the last of the Mauprats, for the chevalier has only a few days longer to await the celestial recompense of his virtues: and, as for me, I can only escape the punishment which I come to seek by sinking again into the eternal night of the cloister. I would speak with Bernard Mauprat,—I will not say my nephew; for, if he heard me, he would blush to bear that fatal title. I learned of his return from America; and this news determined me to undertake the voyage, with the melancholy goal on which you see me."

While speaking thus, it seemed to me that he cast a side glance upon the grove in which I was hidden, as if he had guessed my presence. Perhaps the movement of the branches had betrayed me.

"May I ask you," said the abbé, "what you can have at present in common with that young man? Do you not fear that, embittered by the cruel treatment which, in times past, was not spared him at la Roche Mauprat, he will refuse to see you?"

"I am certain that he will refuse; for I know the hatred which he cherishes against me," said the Trappist, again turning to my hiding-place. "But I hope you will persuade him to grant me this interview, for you are generous and good, Monsieur Abbé. You have promised to oblige me; and, besides, you are the friend of young Mauprat, and can make him understand that this question concerns his interests, and the honor of his name."

"How so?" replied the abbé. "You cannot surely suppose that it will gratify him to see you appear before our courts to answer for crimes now obliterated in the shadow of the cloister. He certainly will desire you to forego this startling expiation; how can you hope that he will consent to it?"

"I hope so because God is good and great, because His grace is efficacious, because He will touch the heart of whoever deigns to listen to the language of a soul truly repentant and strongly convinced; because my eternal salvation is in the hands of this young man, who will not wish to carry his vengeance beyond the tomb. Besides, I must die in peace with those whom I have offended, — I must fall at the feet of Bernard Mauprat, and implore him to forgive my sins. My tears will touch him; or, if his unrelenting soul despises them, I shall at least have accomplished an imperious duty."

When I saw that he was speaking with the certainty of being overheard by me, I was seized with disgust; I thought that I could see fraud and perfidy piercing the mask of his base hypocrisy. I withdrew, therefore, and went to await the abbé at some distance. He soon joined me; the interview had ended with a mutual promise to see each other soon again. The abbé had agreed to bring me the message of the Trappist, who threatened, in the sweetest tone in the world, to come and find me

if I should refuse his request. The abbé and I took a walk, to talk the matter over; for we thought it best not to tell either the chevalier or Edmée about it, to save them unnecessary anxiety. The Trappist had been lodging at la Chatre, at the Carmelite Convent, — a fact that had put the abbé completely on his guard, in spite of his first enthusiasm for the repentance of the sinner. The Carmelite monks had persecuted him in his youth, and the prior had ended by forcing him to secularize himself. The prior was still alive, — old, but implacable, — infirm, obscure, but ardent in hatred and intrigue. The abbé could not hear his name without trembling; and he urged me to act prudently in this whole affair.

"Although Jean Mauprat is under the sentence of the law," he said, "and you are at the summit of honor and prosperity, do not despise the weakness of your enemy. Who knows what cunning and hate can do? They can push the just man from his place, and throw him upon the dunghill; they can cast the suspicion of their crimes upon another, and contaminate with their ignominy the robe of innocence. You have not yet, perhaps, done with the Mauprats."

The poor abbé little knew how truly he spoke.

XIX.

AFTER reflecting seriously upon the probable intentions of the Trappist, I thought that it would be best to grant the interview which he had demanded. Jean Mauprat could not hope to deceive me by his artifices, and I wanted to do all that I could to prevent him from tormenting with his intrigues the last days of my uncle. On the very next day, therefore, towards the close of vespers, I went to the city, and rang, not without emotion, at the gate of the Carmelite Convent.

The retreat chosen by the Trappist was one of the innumerable mendicant communities which France contained. This one, although under a severe rule, was rich, and addicted to pleasure. At this sceptical epoch, the small

number of monks no longer bore any proportion to the number and wealth of the establishments that had been founded for them. Living in vast abbeys, in the depths of the provinces, in the bosom of luxury, freed from the control of public opinion (always ineffectual where man is isolated), they led, therefore, the most tranquil and indolent life which they had ever enjoyed. But this obscurity, mother of amiable vices, as they were then called, was dear only to the ignorant. The leaders gave themselves up to the restless dreams of an ambition nourished in the shade, embittered in inaction; to be accomplishing something, even in the most restricted sphere, and with the help of the most worthless instruments; to be accomplishing something, at any price, — this was the fixed idea of the priors and abbés.

The prior of the *Carmes Chaussés*, whom I went to see, was the living embodiment of this restless impotence. Confined by the gout to his great arm-chair, he offered a strange contrast to the venerable figure of the chevalier, pale and motionless, like himself; but how noble and patriarchal in his melancholy! The prior was short, fat, and petulant. The upper part of his body was free; he moved his head with vivacity from right to left; he gesticulated vehemently in giving his orders; his language was sharp and emphatic, and his husky voice seemed to give a mysterious meaning to each word that he uttered. In a word, half his person seemed perpetually struggling to carry about the other half, like the enchanted man in the Arabian Tales, whose dress concealed a body marble to the waist.

He received me with exaggerated cordiality; he flew into a passion because a chair was not brought quickly enough, stretched out his large flabby hand, to draw this chair near his own, made a sign to a great bearded satyr, whom he called his brother treasurer, to go out; and, finally, after plying me with questions about my voyage, my return, my health, and my family, and looking keenly at me with his small, sharp, and piercing eyes, moving restlessly under the heavy folds of eyelids swollen and inflamed by intemperance, he entered upon the subject.

"I know, my dear child," he said, "what has brought you here: you wish to pay your respects to your holy relative; — to that Trappist, a model of edification, whom God has reclaimed, to serve as an example to the world, and cause the miracle of His grace to shine abroad."

"Monsieur Prior," I replied, "I am not a sufficiently good Christian to appreciate the miracle of which you speak. Let devout souls thank Heaven for it! For my part, I have come here because M. Jean de Mauprat has stated that he desires to communicate to me projects in which I am interested, and to which I am ready to listen. If you will allow me to go to him —"

"I did not wish him to see you before I did, young man," cried the prior, with an affectation of frankness, and seizing my hands, which I could not feel in his without disgust; "I have a favor to ask of you, in the name of charity, in the name of the blood which flows in your veins —"

I succeeded in freeing one of my hands, and the prior, noticing my discontented expression, changed his tone immediately, with admirable dexterity.

"You are a man of the world, I know," he said; "and you have cause to complain of him who was Jean de Mauprat, and who now calls himself the humble brother Jean-Nepomucène. But, if the precepts of our Divine Master Jesus Christ do not inspire you with pity, there are considerations of public decency and family pride which should make you share my fears and my efforts. You know the pious but rash resolution that brother Jean has formed; it is to your interest to join me in dissuading him from it, and you will do so, I have no doubt."

"Perhaps, monsieur," I replied coldly; "but may I ask what has caused you to take such an interest in the affairs of my family?"

"The spirit of charity, which animates all the servants of Christ," replied the monk, with well simulated dignity.

Shielded by this pretext, the excuse invariably offered by the clergy for interfering with all family secrets, it was easy for him to put a stop to my questions; and,

without destroying my well-founded suspicions, he tried to prove by his arguments that I ought to be grateful to him for trying to preserve the honor of my name. It was easy to see what he was aiming at, and what I had foreseen came to pass. My uncle Jean claimed his part of the fief of la Roche Mauprat, and the prior was commissioned to make me understand that I must choose between disbursing a considerable sum (the talk was of the mesne profits of my seven years of possession, besides a seventh part of the property), and giving my consent to the insane action that he pretended to be contemplating, the scandal of which would not fail to hasten the death of the chevalier, besides creating for me, perhaps, "strange personal difficulties."

All this was skilfully insinuated by the prior under an appearance of the most Christian solicitude for me, the most fervent admiration for the zeal of the Trappist, and the most sincere anxiety for the possible consequences of his firm resolution. In a word, it was clearly proved to me that Jean Mauprat had not sought me to beg for a modest support, but that I would have humbly to implore him to accept half my property, in order to prevent him from dragging my name, and perhaps my person, into a criminal court.

I tried a final objection:

"If the resolution of brother Nepomucène, as you call him, Monsieur Prior, is as firm as you say; if the care of his salvation is all that occupies him in this world, explain to me how it is that the temptation of worldly riches can divert him from it? There is a contradiction in this which I can scarcely understand."

The prior was a little disconcerted by this question, and the look with which I accompanied it; but, recovering immediately, he assumed a manner of frank simplicity, — a favorite expedient with rogues.

"Mon Dieu! my dear son," he cried, "do you not know what an immense consolation the possession of worldly goods can shed upon a pious soul? Perishal riches are worthy of scorn when they represent vain ple asres, but the just man should claim them with none t

less firmness, since they give him the means of doing good. In the place of the holy Trappist, I will not conceal from you that I would yield my rights to no one, that I would wish to found a religious community for the propagation of the faith and the distribution of alms with the property, which, in the hands of a young and brilliant seigneur like you, will only serve to defray your monstrous expenditure in horses and dogs. The church teaches that by great sacrifices and rich offerings we can redeem our souls from the blackest sins. Brother Nepomucène, beset by a holy terror, believes that a public expiation is necessary to his salvation. Devoted martyr, he wishes to offer his blood to the implacable justice of men! How much more agreeable will it be for you (and how much surer at the same time), to see him build some holy altar to the glory of God, and hide in the blessed peace of the cloister the fatal renown of the name which he has already abjured. He is so governed by the spirit of la Trappe, he has conceived such a love for self-sacrifice, humility, poverty, that it will take many efforts, and a great deal of assistance from on high, to induce him to accept this exchange of merits."

"It is you then, Monsieur Prior, who have undertaken, out of gratuitous goodness, to change this fatal resolution! I admire your zeal, and thank you for it, but I do not think so many negotiations will be necessary. M. Jean de Mauprat claims his part of the inheritance of his family — nothing can be more just. Even if the law should refuse all civil rights to one who owed his safety only to flight (a subject that I do not care to examine), my relative can be assured that there would be no difference between us upon this point, if I was in possession of any fortune whatever. But you cannot be ignorant that I enjoy this fortune only in virtue of the kindness of my uncle Hubert de Mauprat, who sank more than the value of the estate in paying the debts of the family; that I cannot dispose of any part of it without his consent, and that I am really only the trustee of a fortune of which I have not yet taken possession."

The prior looked at me with surprise, as if struck by unexpected blow; then, with a crafty smile, he said,—

"Very well! It appears that I have been mistaken, that it is to M. Hubert de Mauprat to whom I must apply. I shall do so; for he will thank me, I have no doubt, for saving his family from an unfortunate scandal that may be very advantageous to one of his relatives in another world, but which most surely will be very disastrous to another relative in this world."

"I understand, monsieur," I replied. "This is a threat; I answer in the same tone. If M. Jean de Mauprat ventures to beset my uncle and cousin, it is with me that he will have to deal; and, for my part, I shall not go to law to seek reparation for certain outrages which I have not forgotten. Tell him that I will grant absolution to the penitent of la Trappe only on condition of his remaining faithful to the character he has assumed. If M. Jean de Mauprat is without means, and implores my bounty, I shall be able to give him, from the income I receive, enough to live humbly and wisely, according to the spirit of his vows; but if he is carried away by ecclesiastical ambition, and hopes, with foolish and idle threats, to intimidate my uncle sufficiently to extort from him the means of satisfying his new tastes, tell him, from me, to undeceive himself. The security of the old man, and the future of the young girl, are my care; they have no defender excepting me, and I will defend them, although at the peril of my honor and life."

"Honor and life, notwithstanding, are of some importance at your age," replied the abbé, visibly irritated, but assuming a sweeter manner than ever; "who knows into what folly the Trappist may be drawn by his religious fervor! For, between ourselves, my poor child, understand me: I am a man without exaggeration; I have seen the world in my youth, and I do not approve these extreme determinations, dictated more often by pride than piety. I have consented to abate the austerity of our rule,—my monks look respectable, and wear shirts. Believe me, my dear sir, I am far from approving the design of your relative, and I will do everything in the world to divert him from it; but, after all, if he persists, of what use will my zeal be? He has the permission of

his superior, and may abandon himself to a fatal inspiration. You may be seriously compromised in an affair of this kind; for, in a word, although according to all accounts you are a worthy gentleman, — although you have renounced the errors of the past, even although your soul may always have hated iniquity, — you have, in fact, been concerned in many extortions which human laws reprove and punish. Who knows into what involuntary revelations brother Nepomucène may be drawn, if he provokes a criminal prosecution? Can he bring out one against himself without including you at the same time? Believe me, I wish peace, — I am a good man."

"Yes, a very good man, my father," I replied, ironically; "I see it plainly. But do not be too anxious; for there is a very clear argument that should reassure us both. If it is a real religious vocation which impels brother Jean, the Trappist, to make public reparation, it will be easy to make him understand that he should stop short before drawing another into the abyss; for the spirit of Christ forbids him to do so. But if, as I think is certain, M. Jean de Mauprat has not the least wish to put himself in the hands of justice, his threats are little calculated to terrify me; and I shall take measures to prevent them from making more noise than is expedient."

"This, then, is the only answer that I shall have to carry him?" said the prior, giving me a look full of resentment.

"Yes, monsieur," I replied; "at least, unless he chooses to make his appearance, and receive his answer from my own lips. I came here at his request, determined to conquer the disgust that I feel in his presence; and I am surprised that, after expressing such an earnest desire to see me, he should keep out of the way when I arrive."

"Monsieur," replied the prior, with ridiculous majesty, "it is my duty to make the peace of the Lord reign in this holy place. I shall oppose, therefore, any interview which may lead to violent explanations —"

"You are too easily frightened, Monsieur Prior," I

answered; "there would be no occasion for violence in such an interview. But, as it was not I who sought these explanations, and as I came here out of pure politeness, I give up, with a great deal of pleasure, pushing them further; and thank you for having been willing to act as a medium of communication between us."

I made a low bow, and went out.

XX.

I GAVE the abbé, who waited for me at the house of Patience, an account of this conversation, and he was entirely of my opinion; he thought, as I did, that the prior, far from trying to dissuade the Trappist from his pretended designs, had urged him with all his power to terrify me, so as to make me pay a great deal of money. It was quite simple in his eyes, that this old man, faithful to the monkish spirit, should desire to put into the hands of a Mauprat monk the fruit of the labors and savings of a Mauprat layman.

"It is the unfailing characteristic of the Catholic clergy," he said; "they cannot live without making war upon families, and without spying out every means of despoiling them. They seem to think that the property of the laity belongs to them, and that any way of getting possession of it is justifiable. It is not so easy as you think to defend yourself against this gentle robbery. Monks have a persevering appetite, and an ingenious intellect. Be prudent and wary. You can never make a Trappist fight; intrenched behind his cowl, with head bent and hands crossed, he will let you insult him in the most outrageous way, and, knowing that you will not assassinate him, he scarcely fears you. And then you do not know what justice is in the hands of men, and how a criminal suit is conducted and judged, when one of the parties does not hesitate to employ every sort of bribery and intimidation. The clergy is powerful; lawyers are declamatory; the words probity and integrity have resounded for ages within the hardened walls of courts,

without unmasking prevaricating judges, or preventing iniquitous sentences. Be on your guard — be on your guard! The Trappist may set the lawyers going upon his track, and then throw them off, just in time to leave them upon yours. You have wounded the vanity of a number of young men, by having been the occasion of your cousin's rejecting them. One of the most incensed and malicious of these is the near relative of a magistrate, all powerful in this province. De la Marche abandoned the law to enter the army; but he may have left, among his former comrades, persons ready to do you an injury. I am sorry that you were not able to join him in America, and put yourself on a right footing with him. Do not shrug your shoulders; you may kill a dozen of these men, and things will go from bad to worse. Your enemies will avenge themselves, not, perhaps, by seeking your life, they know you are careless of that, but by assailing your honor; and your uncle will die of grief. In a word —"

"In a word, my dear abbé," I said, interrupting him, "you are in the habit of looking at the dark side of everything at the first glance, when, by chance, you do not see the sun at midnight. A truce to your gloomy presentiments! I know Jean Mauprat of old; he is a rank impostor, and, still further, an arrant coward. He will burrow under the earth again at the sight of me; and, with a word, I will make him confess that he is neither a Trappist, a monk, nor a saint. His pretended sanctity is merely the trick of a swindler; and I have heard him, before this, make plans which keep me from being astonished now at his impudence; I fear him, therefore, very little."

"And you are wrong," replied the abbé. "You should always fear a coward, for he strikes you in the back at the moment when you are waiting to confront him. If Jean Mauprat were not a Trappist, if the papers which he showed me were false, the prior of Carmes is too subtle and prudent ever to have meddled with the affair. He is not a man who would ever have had anything to do with the cause of a layman, or who would ever have mis-

taken a layman for one of his brethren. We will make inquiries, however; I will write immediately to the superior of la Trappe; but I am certain that he will confirm what I already know. It is even possible that Jean de Mauprat may be sincerely devout. Nothing suits such a character better than certain shades of Catholicism. The inquisition is the soul of the church, and the inquisition ought to smile upon Jean de Mauprat. I can readily believe that he would deliver himself up to the secular arm, only to have the pleasure of destroying you with himself; and that the ambition of founding a monastery with your income is a sudden inspiration, all the honor of which belongs to the Carmelite prior."

"That is scarcely probable, my dear abbé," I said. "Besides, what do all these speculations amount to? Something must be done. We will keep the chevalier in sight, to prevent this unclean animal from coming to poison the serenity of his closing days. We will write to la Trappe, offer a pension to the wretch, and see what comes of it, while carefully watching all his movements. My sergeant Marcasse is an excellent bloodhound; we will put him upon his track, and if he can succeed in reporting what he sees and hears in common language, we shall soon know all that is happening throughout the country."

While chatting thus, we reached the chateau at about twilight. A tender and vague anxiety, like that which mothers feel when they have been separated for a moment from their children, seized me as I entered this silent abode. The eternal security which nothing had ever troubled within its old sacred walls, the careless tranquillity of the old family servants, the doors always open; — the chateau was left so unguarded, that beggars sometimes entered the drawing-room without meeting any one, and without giving any offence; this whole atmosphere of repose, confidence, and isolation, contrasted strangely with the thoughts of strife, and the perplexities with which the return of Jean, and the threats of the Carmelite, had filled my mind for several hours. I hurried on, and, shuddering involuntarily, crossed the billiard hall. At that mo-

ment I thought I saw, passing the windows of the ground floor, a black shadow, which glided among the jasmines and disappeared in the twilight. I threw the door of the drawing-room open, and paused,—all was silent and still. I was about to return and seek Edmée in her father's chamber, when I distinguished something white moving near the chimney-corner, where the chevalier usually sat.

"Edmée, are you here?" I cried.

There was no answer. My forehead was bathed in a cold sweat, and my knees trembled. Ashamed of a weakness so unaccountable I rushed to the fireplace, repeating the name of Edmée with a cry of agony.

"Is it you, at last, Bernard?" she answered, in a trembling voice.

I seized her in my arms; she was kneeling by her father's arm-chair, and was pressing the icy hands of the old man to her lips.

"Great God!" I cried, distinguishing, by the feeble light which reigned in the apartment, the livid and rigid face of the chevalier, "is our father dead?"

"It may be," she said, in a stifled voice; "God grant that he has only fainted! A light! Ring for a light, in Heaven's name! He has only been in this state for an instant."

I rang in all haste; the abbé joined us, and we had the good fortune to recall my uncle to life. But when he opened his eyes, he still seemed struggling against the impressions of a painful dream.

"Has he gone, has he gone, the miserable phantom?" he cried, several times. "Halloo! Saint-Jean! My pistols! Here, my people! Throw this rogue out of the window!"

I suspected the truth.

"What has happened?" I said to Edmée, in a low voice; "what has happened during my absence?"

"If I tell you," replied Edmée, "you will scarcely believe me, and you will accuse both my father and myself of having lost our senses: but I will tell you all soon; we must take care of my father now."

She succeeded, with her gentle words and tender caresses, in restoring the old man to tranquillity. We carried him to his room, and he fell into a quiet sleep. When Edmée had softly withdrawn her hand from his, and had pulled down the wadded curtain about his head, she joined the abbé and myself, and told us, that quarter of an hour before our return a mendicant friar had come into the drawing-room, where, as usual, she was embroidering, by the side of her sleeping father. But little surprised at an incident which had occurred several times, she arose to take her purse from the mantle-piece, at the same time that she spoke kindly to the monk; but, as she was turning to give him her alms, the chevalier awakened suddenly, and eyeing him from head to foot, with an expression both of rage and terror, cried, —

"The devil! monsieur, what are you masquerading here for in that costume?"

Then Edmée had looked into the face of the monk and had recognized —

"You would never guess who," she said; "the frightful Jean Mauprat. I had seen him only once in my life, but his repulsive face never faded from my memory; and never have I had the slightest attack of fever without its appearing before me. I could not keep from uttering a cry.

"'Have no fear!' he said, with a horrible smile; 'I do not come here as an enemy, but as a supplicant.'

"He fell on his knees so close to my father, that, not knowing what he was going to do, I threw myself between them, and pushed his wheeled arm-chair so that it rolled clear back to the wall. Then the monk, speaking in a lugubrious voice, which the approach of night rendered still more terrifying, began to declaim, I know not what lamentable formula of confession, imploring pardon for his crimes, and saying that he was already covered with the black veil of parricides when they ascend the scaffold.

"'The wretch has gone mad!' said my father, pulling the bell-rope.

"But Saint-Jean is deaf, and did not come. We had

to listen, in inexpressible agony, to the strange discourse of this man, who calls himself a Trappist, and who pretends that he has come to give himself up to the secular arm, in expiation for his crimes. He wished, beforehand, to beg my father for his pardon and last benediction. While saying this, he dragged himself forward upon his knees, and spoke vehemently. There was insult and menace in the sound of his voice, which was uttering the words of an extravagant humility. He drew nearer and nearer to my father; and as the idea of the loathsome caresses, which he seemed about to bestow upon him, filled me with disgust, I ordered him, in an imperious tone, to rise, and speak properly. My father, enraged, ordered him to hold his tongue, and retire; and, as at that instant he cried, 'No! You must let me embrace your knees!' I pushed him back, to keep him from touching my father. I tremble with horror to think that my hand has touched that filthy frock. He turned towards me, and, although still affecting repentance and humility, I saw rage flashing in his eyes. My father made a violent effort to rise; and, in fact, he really did rise, as if by a miracle, but instantly fell back fainting in his chair; steps were heard in the billiard-room, and the monk went out by the glass door, with the rapidity of lightning. It was then that you found us, — my father in a swoon, and I, half dead and frozen with terror, at his feet."

"The abominable wretch did not lose any time, you see, abbé!" I cried; "he wanted to frighten my uncle and his daughter, and he has succeeded; but he did not take me into the account, and I swear, although I have to treat him in the fashion of la Roche Mauprat — if he ever dares show his face here again — "

"Hush, Bernard!" said Edmée; "you make me tremble. Talk sensibly, and tell me what all this means."

When I had told her about what had happened to the abbé and myself, she blamed us for not having warned her.

"If I had known what I had to expect," she said, "I

should not have been alarmed; and I should have taken precautions not to have remained alone in the house with my father and Saint-Jean, who is no longer nimble; now I am no longer afraid, and I will be on my guard. But the surest way, my dear Bernard, will be to avoid all contact with this odious man, and to pension him as largely as possible, to get rid of him. The abbé is right, — he may be formidable; he knows that our relationship will always keep us from going to law to seek protection from his persecutions; and, if he cannot injure us as seriously as he imagines, he can at least subject us to a thousand mortifications, which I am reluctant to brave. Give him as much gold as he wants, and let him go; but never leave me again, Bernard. You see that you are absolutely necessary to me; be consoled, therefore, for the injury which you think you have done me."

I pressed her hands in mine, and swore never to leave her, even if she should order it, as long as the Trappist had not freed the country from his presence.

The abbé undertook to negotiate with the convent. He went to the city the next day, and carried from me to the Trappist my express assurance that I would throw him out of the window, if he should ever take it into his head to reappear at the chateau of Saint Sévère. I proposed, at the same time, to supply his wants, and to supply them generously, if he would withdraw immediately, whether to his own abbey, or to any other secular or religious retreat which he might select, and agree never to return to Berry.

The prior received the abbé with every evidence of his profound disdain and holy aversion for his state of heresy; far from cajoling him as he did me, he told him that he wished to remain a stranger to the whole affair, — that he washed his hands of it; and would confine himself to delivering from one to the other the decisions that were arrived at, and giving an asylum to brother Nepomucène, both through Christian charity, and to edify his monks by the example of a really holy man. If one might believe him, this brother Nepomucène would be the second of that name placed in the first rank of the celestial church militant by canonization.

On the following day the abbé, recalled to the convent by a special messenger, had an interview with the Trappist. To his great surprise, he found that the enemy had changed his tactics. He refused with indignation any sort of assistance, alleging his vow of poverty and humility; and blaming emphatically his dear friend the prior for having dared to propose, without his knowledge, the exchange of eternal for temporal goods. He refused to explain his intentions, and confined himself to ambiguous and turgid declamation. God would inspire him, he said; at the approaching festival of the Virgin, at the solemn and sublime hour of the holy Communion, he had been led to believe that he would hear the voice of Jesus speaking to his heart, and dictating to him the conduct that he must pursue.

The abbé feared to betray too much anxiety, by insisting upon penetrating this holy mystery,— and he returned bringing me this reply, which was less calculated than any other to reassure me.

Notwithstanding, days and weeks passed away, and the Trappist gave no sign of life in any way whatever. He reappeared neither at the chateau nor in the neighborhood; and kept himself so closely confined at the Carmelites, that few persons saw his face. It was soon known, however, — and the prior took great pains to spread the news, — that Jean Mauprat, converted to the most exemplary piety, had come as a penitent from la Trappe to the Carmelite Convent. Each morning they reported some new trait of virtue, some new act of austerity, of this holy personage. The devout, eager for the marvellous, wished to see him, and carried him a thousand little presents, which he refused with obstinacy. Sometimes he hid himself so well that he was said to have gone to la Trappe; but, just as we were beginning to hope that he had gone for good, we would learn that, clothed in sackcloth and ashes, he had been enduring frightful mortifications, — or, indeed, that he had been wandering, bare-footed, in the most deserted and uncultivated parts of Varenne, to visit shrines. They went so far as to say that he performed

miracles; if the prior was not cured of his gout, it was because, out of a feeling of pure penitence, he did not wish to be cured.

This uncertainty lasted nearly two months.

XXI.

THESE days of confidential intimacy were, for me, delicious and terrible. To see Edmée at all hours without fearing to be indiscreet, since she herself called me to her side, — to read to her, to talk with her upon all subjects, — to share with her the tender cares which she bestowed upon her father, — to be half in her life, absolutely as if we were brother and sister, — was a great happiness, without doubt, but it was a dangerous happiness; and I found it difficult to hide the ardor of my love. My confused words and troubled looks betrayed me. Edmée was not blind, but she remained impenetrable; her eyes, so dark and deep, turned upon me, as upon her father, with all the tenderness of an exclusive nature, would suddenly become cold when I could not help revealing what I felt. Her face expressed, at such moments, nothing but a patient curiosity, and her inflexible determination to read the very bottom of my soul without letting me see even the surface of hers.

My sufferings, although intense, were dear to me at first; I took pleasure in considering them an expiation offered to Edmée for my former faults. I hoped she would divine what was passing in my mind, and would be pleased with my conduct. She saw it all, and said nothing. My misery increased, but several days passed before I lost the power to conceal it. I say days; but whoever has loved a woman, and has been alone with her, restrained by her severity, knows that such days seem like ages. What a life was mine, — how calm, and yet tempestuous! What languor and agitation, what tenderness and rage, alternated in my soul! Hours seemed like years to me; and at present, if I did not correct the errors of my memory by dates, I could easily persuade

myself that these two months extended over half my life. Perhaps, also, I should be glad to imagine that this was so, as some excuse for my ridiculous and guilty conduct, throwing scorn upon the good resolutions which I had so lately formed. My relapse was so prompt and complete, that it would make me blush even now, if, as you will soon see, it had not been cruelly expiated.

After a night of agony I wrote Edmée a frantic letter, which came very near having the most frightful results. It was in about these terms: —

"You do not love me, Edmée, — you will never love me. I know it; I ask for nothing, I hope for nothing, — I wish merely to remain near you, and devote my life to your service and defence. To be useful to you, I will do all that I have strength to perform; but I shall suffer, and, however I may try to conceal my misery, you will see it, and will, perhaps, attribute to wrong motives a sadness which I shall not always be heroic enough to repress. You wounded me deeply yesterday, by urging me to go out a little to seek some amusement. Seek amusement away from you, Edmée! What bitter mockery! Do not be cruel, my poor sister; for then you will become again the imperious fiancée of my evil days, and, in spite of myself, I shall become the brigand whom you detest. Ah! if you knew how unhappy I am! There are two men in me, who are constantly fighting in mortal combat; we must hope that the brigand will be conquered, but he defends himself step by step, and he groans, for he is covered with wounds, and feels the approach of death. If you knew, — if you knew, Edmée, what struggles, what conflicts go on within me, what tears of blood my heart weeps, and what madness seizes me when I am governed by the rebel angels. Sometimes I suffer so much, that, in my delirious dreams, it seems to me that I am plunging a dagger into your heart, and that, by a dreadful magic, I force you in this way to love me as I do you. When I awake, bathed in a cold sweat, bewildered, out of my mind, I am tempted to go and kill you, so as to annihilate the cause of my suffering. If I do not do this, it is because I fear that I

should love you after you were dead with as much passion and obstinacy as if you were alive. I fear that I should be governed, controlled, subjugated by your image as I am by your person; and then, in reality, man has no power to destroy life, — the being whom he loves and dreads exists within him when he has ceased to exist upon the earth. The soul of the lover is the tomb of his mistress, in which her burning image, free from decay or change, is forever enshrined. But, O heavens! how wild my ideas are! See, Edmée, how crazy my mind is, and pity me. Have patience, — let me be sad, — never doubt my devotion; I am often frantic, but I cherish you always. A word, a look of yours will always recall me to my duty; and that duty will be sweet when you deign to make me remember it. At this hour, when I am writing to you, Edmée, the sky is covered with clouds heavy and gloomy as lead, the thunder rolls, and melancholy ghosts seem to float in the ligtning's glare. My soul lies prostrate under the burden of the storm, — my thoughts are troubled and wavering, like the uncertain meteors that glimmer every now and then upon the horizon. The fire smouldering within me seems about to break forth, like the tempest. Ah! if I could speak to you with a voice like that of the storm! if I had the power to produce externally the agony and fury that devour me! Often, when a hurricane sweeps over the great oaks, you say that you love the spectacle of its rage and their resistance. It is, you say, the struggle of great forces; and you feel as if you could hear, amid the noises that fill the air, the imprecations of the north wind and the doleful cries of the aged branches. Which of them suffers the most, Edmée, — the tree which resists, or the wind which exhausts itself in attacking? Is it not always the wind which yields and dies? and then the heavens, mourning the defeat of their noble son, weep rivers of tears, in which the earth is drowned. You like these foolish images, Edmée; and, each time that you see strength vanquished by resistance, you smile cruelly, and your mysterious gaze seems to insult my misery. Ah, well! do not doubt it, you have thrown me

to the earth, and, although crushed, I still suffer; know it, since you wish to know it, since you are so pitiless as to question me, and feign to feel compassion for me. I suffer, and no longer try to lift off the foot which the haughty conqueror has placed upon my fainting breast."

The rest of this letter, which was very long, very incoherent, and absurd from beginning to end, was conceived in the same spirit. It was not the first time that I had written to Edmée, although we were living under the same roof, and were never separated, excepting during the hours of repose. My love absorbed me so entirely that I could not help robbing myself of sleep, so as to write to her. I thought that I could never talk to her enough about herself; that I could never renew sufficiently the promise of submission, which I was breaking every moment; but my present letter was bolder and more passionate than any of the others. Perhaps it was written by a fatality, under the influence of the tempest which was raging in the heavens, while, bending over my table, the perspiration streaming from my forehead, and my hand dry and burning, I traced with feverish excitement the picture of my sufferings. A strange calmness, almost like despair, came over me, when I threw myself upon my bed, after going to the drawing-room, and slipping my letter into Edmée's work-basket. Daylight began to appear: the horizon was clouded with the gloomy wings of the departing storm. The trees, heavy with rain, quivered in the refreshing breeze. Very sad, but blindly devoted to suffering, I fell asleep, comforted, as if I had made the sacrifice of my life and hopes. Edmée did not seem to have found this letter, for she did not answer it. She had been in the habit of doing this verbally, and in this way I had obtained from her the effusions of fraternal friendship, with which I was forced to content myself, and which at least poured balm upon my wounded heart. I might have known that this letter must either have led to a decisive explanation, or be passed over in silence; but I did not think of this. I suspected the abbé of having taken it, to throw into the fire; I accused Edmée of scorn and cruelty, but still I remained silent.

The next day the storm was entirely over. My uncle rode out in a carriage, and on the way said that he would like, before he died, to have a grand final fox-hunt. He had a great passion for this sport, and his health had now become so much improved that he was beginning once more to wish for enjoyment and activity.

A narrow and very light berlin, with a team of strong mules, ran rapidly over the sandy paths of our woods, and he had already followed in it several little hunting expeditions, which we had gotten up to amuse him Since the visit of the Trappist, the chevalier had taken a new hold upon life. Strong and energetic, like all his race, it really seemed as if he was dying from the lack of excitement; for the least appeal to his torpid energies made his blood circulate more rapidly for the moment. As he was very much in earnest about the hunt, Edmée agreed to organize, with my help, a general battue, and to take an active part in it. One of the great delights of the old man was to see his daughter upon horseback, prancing boldly by his carriage, and handing him the blossoming branches which she snatched from the thickets through which they passed. It was decided that I should go on horseback, to escort her, and that the abbé should accompany the chevalier in his berlin. The ban and arrière ban of gamekeepers, foresters, huntsmen, and even the poachers of Varenne, were summoned to this family solemnity. A famous supper, in which goose-pie and vin ordinaire made a great display, was prepared for their return. Marcasse, whom I had made my overseer at la Roche Mauprat, and who was a grand connoisseur in the art of fox-hunting, passed two entire days in stopping up the foxes' holes in the woods. Several young farmers of the neighborhood, interested in the battue, and able to give good advice on occasion, graciously offered to join the party; and finally, Patience, in spite of his aversion to the slaying of innocent animals, consented to follow the hunt, as an amateur. On the appointed day, which arose warm and serene over our gay projects and my implacable destiny, about fifty persons held themselves in readiness, with horns, horses, and dogs. The

day was to end with a great slaughter of hares, which were so excessively numerous, that it was easy to destroy them *en masse*, by driving that part of the wood that had not been beaten during the hunt. Each of the party, therefore, armed himself with a rifle; even my uncle took one, to shoot from his carriage, as he could still do with great skill.

Edmée was mounted upon a pretty little Limousin mare, very swift and spirited, which she amused herself by coquettishly exciting and quieting, to please her old father. For two hours she scarcely left the side of the calash in which the chevalier was seated; while he, smiling, cheerful, animated, gazed upon her with speechless love. Just as we salute, at the approach of night, the radiant star which, impelled forward by the rotation of our globe, leaves us to reign over another hemisphere, even so the old man consoled himself for his approaching death by beholding the youth, strength, and beauty of his daughter surviving him in another generation.

Edmée, who certainly shared the martial disposition of the family, in spite of her tranquillity, could not always restrain her natural impetuosity. When the hunt was well under way, she obeyed her father's repeated signs and entreaties, — the greatest desire of the old man was to see her gallop,— and followed the huntsmen, who by this time were far in advance.

"Follow her, follow her!" the chevalier cried to me; for as soon as she started, his touching paternal vanity gave way to anxiety.

I did not wait to be told twice; plunging my spurs into my horse, I joined Edmée in a cross-path, which she had taken to intercept the hunters. I trembled when I saw her, bending like a reed, under the branches, while her horse, which she was urging forward, carried her through the thick wood with the rapidity of lightning.

"Edmée, for the love of God," I cried, "do not go so fast, — you will be killed!"

"Let me go," she answered, gayly; "my father is willing. Leave me alone, I tell you; I will hit you over the knuckles if you stop my horse."

"Let me at least follow you," I said, pursuing her as rapidly as possible. "Your father commanded me to do so, and I shall be ready to kill myself if any misfortune happens to you."

Why was I possessed by these gloomy forebodings, I who had so often seen Edmée galloping through the woods? I know not. I was in a strange state; the heat of the sun affected my brain, and I was singularly nervous. I had eaten no breakfast, for I did not feel well when we started, and, to keep up my strength, had drank several cups of coffee mixed with rum. From whatever cause, I experienced a strange sense of terror; then, after a few moments, this fright was succeeded by an indescribable feeling of love and joy. I was so excited by my race with Edmée, that I forgot that I had any other object than that of pursuing her. To see her flying before me on her black horse, swift as the wind, and whose feet flew noiselessly over the moss, she might have been taken for a fairy, appearing in this desert place to bewilder men's reason, and entice them into her fatal retreats. I forgot the hunt and everything else: I saw only Edmée; a cloud passed before my eyes, and I no longer saw her, but I galloped on; I was in a state of silent frenzy, when she suddenly stopped.

"What are we doing?" she said; "I no longer hear the hunt, and yonder is the river. We have gone too much to the left."

"On the contrary, Edmée," I answered, without knowing what I was saying; "another gallop, and we shall join them."

"How flushed you are!" she said. "But how shall we pass the river?"

"Since there is a road there must be a ford," I answered. "Onward, onward!"

I felt an insane desire to rush on. My idea was to plunge deeper and deeper into the woods with Edmée; but this idea was almost unconscious; when I tried to bring it clearly before my mind, it eluded me, and I could only feel a violent throbbing in my breast and temples. Edmée made an impatient gesture.

"These woods are accursed," she said; "I always get lost in them."

Without doubt she thought of the fatal day when she had been run away with, and taken to la Roche Mauprat, for I thought of it also, and the recollection gave me a sort of vertigo. I followed her mechanically to the river. Suddenly I saw her on the other shore. I was seized with fury on seeing that her horse was more agile and courageous than mine, — for mine refused to enter the ford, which was very difficult, and, before I could make him obey, Edmée had gained upon me considerably. I dug my spurs into his sides; and, when I reached the shore, after he had nearly thrown me several times, I galloped after Edmée, in a towering passion. I joined her, and seized the bridle of her mare, crying, —

"Stop, Edmée! I wish it. You shall not go any further."

At the same time I pulled her reins so rudely, that her horse reared. She lost her balance; and, to keep from falling, leaped lightly between our two horses, at the risk of being thrown. I was on the ground almost as soon as she, and I pushed the horses back violently. Edmée's, which was gentle, stopped, and began to browse; mine ran away, and disappeared. All this took place in an instant.

I had caught Edmée in my arms; she freed herself, and said dryly, —

"You are very brutal, Bernard, and I detest your manners. Whom do you take after?"

Troubled, confused, I told her that I thought her mare was running away, and feared she would meet with an accident, if she rode so recklessly.

"And to save me you make me fall, at the risk of killing me," she said. "That is very obliging, truly."

"Let me put you on your horse," I said.

Without waiting her permission, I took her in my arms and lifted her from the ground.

"You know very well that I do not get on horseback in that way," she cried, thoroughly irritated. "Leave me alone; I do not want your help."

But I could no longer obey her; I had lost my senses I clasped her waist, and could not loosen my arms; in spite of myself I kissed her neck. She grew pale with anger.

"How unhappy I am," I said, with my eyes full of tears; "how unhappy I am, always to offend you, and always to make you hate me, more and more, in proportion as I love you more."

Edmée's nature was imperious and violent, and the trials through which she had passed had given her additional courage and energy. She was no longer the trembling young girl, full of inspiration, but more ingenious than bold in her defence, whom I had pressed in my arms at la Roche Mauprat; she was a proud and fearless woman, who would have perished rather than allow an audacious hope. Besides, she was a woman who knew that she was passionately loved, and who knew her power. She repulsed me, then, with scorn; and as I followed her, in a sort of frenzy, she raised her whip, and threatened to strike me with it, if I dared touch even her stirrup.

I fell upon my knees, and implored her not to leave me thus without a word of forgiveness. She was already on horseback; and, looking around to find the road, cried, —

"Nothing was wanting but to see again this detested spot. See, monsieur, see where we are!"

I looked in my turn, and saw that we were on the edge of the wood, on the shady shore of the little pond of Gazeau. Two steps from us, plainly visible between the trees, which had grown thicker since the departure of Patience, I saw the door of the tower yawning open, like a black mouth, behind the green foliage.

I was taken again with vertigo, and my two instincts struggled fiercely. Who will explain what takes place in the mind of man when his soul is in conflict with his senses, — when one part of his nature seeks to stifle the other part? In an organization like mine, such a struggle is terrible; and do not imagine, because it is sometimes defeated, that the will plays a subordinate part in

passionate natures; it is foolish to say to a man exhausted in such struggles, "You should have conquered yourself."

XXII.

HOW shall I describe what I felt at the unexpected sight of Gazeau Tower? I had seen it only twice in my life, and both times the most terrible and heart-rending scenes had happened there; and yet these scenes were nothing in comparison with the one that was destined to take place at this third encounter. — There are places that are accursed!

It seemed to me that I could still see, on the half broken-down door, the blood of the two Mauprats with which it had been bespattered. Their criminal and tragic destiny made me blush for the violent instincts of which I was conscious in myself. I was horrified at my own emotions, and I understood why Edmée did not love me; but, as if there had been in that miserable blood the elements of a sympathetic fatality, the unbridled force of my passions was increased by the very effort that I made to conquer them. I had subdued all my other bad habits: I was sober; I was at least sensible and affectionate, if not gentle and patient. I had the highest ideal of honor and respect for the dignity of others; but love was the most formidable of my enemies, for it was connected with all my acquired morality and delicacy, — it was the link between my two natures, and I could not find the happy medium between passion and reason that I vainly sought.

Erect before Edmée, who was preparing to leave me standing there alone, furious to see her escape me for the last time, — for, after the insult which I had offered her, I could not doubt that she would never again run the risk of being alone with me, — I gazed at her in a frightful manner. I was pale, — my hands were clenched; I could have snatched her from her horse, and conquered her resistance without an effort of my strength, if I had chosen, — if I had abandoned myself for a single instant

to my ferocious instincts. Edmée never knew the danger that her honor ran in this moment of agony: I remember it with eternal remorse; but God must be my judge, for I triumphed, and this thought of evil was the last of my life. It was in thought alone, moreover, that I was guilty, — what followed was the work of fatality.

Seized with affright, I turned away abruptly; and, wringing my hands in despair, fled by the path that had led me to her, without knowing where I was going, comprehending only that I must escape these dangerous temptations. The day was sultry, the odor of the woods intoxicating, — the sight of them carried me back to the sentiments of my savage life; I had to fly or yield. The idea that Edmée was in any other danger than that which she ran with me, did not occur to me; I rushed into the woods. Scarcely had I gone thirty steps, when a gun was fired from the place where I had left Edmée. I paused, frozen with terror, and without any good reason, for, in a hunt, there is nothing strange in the firing of a gun; but I was so oppressed by a gloomy foreboding, that nothing seemed to me unimportant. I was about to return, and rejoin Edmée, at the risk of offending her again, when I thought I heard a human groan in the direction of Gazeau Tower. I rushed forward, and then fell upon my knees, so great was my emotion, as if thunderstruck. It took me some moments to conquer my weakness, — doleful images hovered before me, and lamentable sounds seemed to fill the air; I could no longer distinguish illusion from reality, — in the bright sunshine I went groping among the trees like a blind man. Suddenly I found myself face to face with the abbé. He was seeking Edmée anxiously. The chevalier had had his carriage stationed where he could see the hunters pass, and, finding that his daughter was not among them, he had become alarmed. The abbé had hurried into the woods, and soon finding the track of our horses, he had followed to learn what had become of us. He had heard the shot, without being alarmed by it; but when he saw me, pale, dishevelled, bewildered, without a horse and without a gun (mine had fallen from my belt when I had

half fainted, and I had not thought of taking it up again), he was as much frightened as I, and without knowing any better than I did upon what account.

"Edmée!" he said; "where is Edmée?"

I replied incoherently. He was so alarmed at seeing me in such a condition, that in his own mind he accused me, as he afterwards acknowledged, of having committed a crime.

"Unhappy child!" he said, shaking me violently by the arm, to recall me to myself; "be prudent, be calm, I implore you!"

I did not understand him, but I dragged him forward to the fatal place. O, terrible spectacle! Edmée was lying upon the ground, stiff, and bathed in her blood. Her mare was browsing the turf a few steps off. Patience was standing over her, with his arms crossed upon his breast, — his face livid, and his heart so swollen that it was impossible for him to answer the abbé, who questioned him with sobs and cries. For my part, I did not understand anything that occurred. I think that my brain, already troubled by my previous emotions, was completely paralyzed. I sat down on the ground by the side of Edmée, whose breast had been struck by two balls. I gazed upon her with dim eyes, in a state of absolute stupidity.

"Remove that wretch!" said Patience to the abbé, glancing contemptuously at me; "his perverse heart has remained unchanged."

"Edmée! Edmée!" cried the abbé, throwing himself upon the ground, and trying to stanch her blood with his handkerchief.

"Dead! dead!" cried Patience, — "and behold the murderer! She said so in rendering her pure soul to God, and it is Patience who will avenge her. It is very hard, but it must be! It is the will of God, since He sent me to this spot to hear the truth."

"It is horrible! it is horrible!" cried the abbé.

I heard the sound of his last word, and, smiling vacantly, repeated it like an echo.

The hunters now appeared. Edmée was carried away.

I thought that I saw her father, erect and walking. I should not have been able to affirm, however, that this was not a mere delusion (for I had no clear consciousness of anything, and retained only vague recollections, like those of a dream, of these frightful moments), if I had not been assured that the chevalier really did get out of his carriage without any assistance, and that he walked and acted with as much vigor and presence of mind as a young man. The next day he fell into a state of complete childishness and insensibility, and never again arose from his bed.

What happened to me I do not know. When I came to my senses I was in another part of the forest, near a waterfall, to whose murmuring voice I listened mechanically, and with a sort of content. Blaireau was asleep at my feet, and his master, leaning against a tree, was looking earnestly at me. The setting sun cast long rays of a reddish gold through the slender trunks of the young ash-trees, — the wild flowers seemed to smile upon me, — the birds sang melodiously. It was one of the most beautiful days of the year.

"What a magnificent evening!" I said to Marcasse. "This place is as beautiful as a forest in America. Ah, well! my old friend, what are you doing there? You should have waked me sooner, — I have had frightful dreams."

Marcasse came and knelt by my side; tears poured in torrents over his withered and yellow cheeks. In his face, usually so impassive, there was an ineffable expression of pity, grief, and affection.

"Poor master!" he said; "frenzy, madness of the brain, that is the whole thing. Great misfortune, but fidelity cannot change. Eternally with you, if I must die with you."

His tears and words filled me with sadness; but it was sympathy only, and my extreme feebleness, that occasioned it, for I did not remember anything that had happened. I threw myself into his arms, weeping like himself, and he pressed me to his breast with an effusion of tenderness that was truly paternal. I felt a vague conscious-

ness that some terrible misfortune had fallen upon me, but I was afraid to know what it was; and nothing in the world would have tempted me to question him.

He took me by the arm, and led me through the forest. I submitted to his guidance like a child; but soon I was seized with a new attack of weakness, and he had to let me sit down for about half an hour. Finally, he lifted me up, and succeeded in getting me to la Roche Mauprat, where we arrived very late. I do not know what happened during the night. According to Marcasse, I was frightfully delirious. He took the responsibility of sending to the nearest village for a barber, who bled me early in the morning, and in a few moments I recovered my reason.

"*Dead! Dead! Dead!*" This was the only word that I could articulate. I did nothing but groan and toss about upon my bed. I wanted to get up, and hasten to Saint Sévère. My poor sergeant threw himself at my feet, and planted himself before the door of my room to keep me from doing so. In order to detain me, he said things which I did not understand at all; and I yielded at last, conquered by his tenderness and my own exhaustion, without being able to explain his conduct. In one of these struggles the vein where I had been bled opened, and I went to bed without its being perceived by Marcasse. I sank gradually into a deep swoon, and was almost dead, when, seeing my blue lips and pallid cheeks, he thought of lifting up the coverlids, and found me swimming in a pool of blood.

This, however, was the most fortunate thing that could have happened. I remained for several days plunged in an apathy which was almost like sleep, and, thanks to which, I understood nothing, and therefore suffered nothing.

One morning, when he had finally succeeded in making me take some nourishment, and saw that with my strength my sadness and anxiety were beginning to return, Marcasse told me, with a simple and tender joy, that Edmée was not dead, and that they did not despair of saving her life. This struck me like a thunderbolt: I remembered

vaguely my late terrible adventure, but hitherto I had regarded the whole scene as the creation of my delirium. Marcasse, falling on his knees by my bed, begged me to be calm; and repeated twenty times strange expressions, sounding to me like the unmeaning words heard in dreams:

"You did not do it on purpose; I know it well. No, you did not do it on purpose. It was a misfortune,— a gun went off in your hand, by mistake."

"How now! what are you saying?" I cried, becoming impatient. "What gun,— what mistake,— what do you mean?"

"Do you not know then, master, how she was struck?"

I passed my hands over my head, as if to recall my life and energy; and, finding that I could not explain the mysterious event by which I was utterly shattered, I thought that I had lost my mind, and remained silent and prostrated, fearing to utter a word, lest it should prove the loss of my faculties.

Finally, little by little, my memory returned. I asked for wine to strengthen me, and as soon as I had drank a few drops all the scenes of that fatal day unrolled before me as if by magic. I even remembered what Patience had said immediately after the accident. The sound of his words was, as it were, graven upon my memory, although their sense had not seemed to make any impression upon me. For an instant I was uncertain; I asked myself whether my gun had really gone off in my hand at the moment that I had left Edmée. I remembered clearly having fired it, an hour before, at a lapwing whose plumage Edmée had wished to examine; and then, when I heard the shot by which she had been struck, my gun was still in my belt, and it had not fallen until a moment afterwards; she could not, therefore, have been wounded by this weapon going off in falling. Besides, I was much too far from Edmée at that moment to have allowed the ball to reach her, even supposing that the gun had exploded by an inexplicable fatality. Finally, I had not had a single ball about me during the whole day; and, as I had not unslung my gun after killing the lapwing, it

was impossible that it should have been loaded by any one else without my knowledge.

Very sure, therefore, that I was not the author of the fatal accident, it remained for me to find an explanation of this frightful catastrophe. This was not difficult for me: I thought that an awkward hunter, seeing Edmée's horse indistinctly through the branches, had mistaken it for a wild beast, and had fired upon it under this supposition. it did not occur to me to accuse any one in the world of a deliberate attempt to assassinate her. I understood, however, that I myself was accused. I wrested the truth from Marcasse. He told me that the chevalier and all the hunt attributed this misfortune to an accident, — they thought that my gun had gone off in my hand, to my own despair, when my horse had thrown me; for they imagined that I had been thrown. This was about the opinion which they had all expressed. The few words that Edmée uttered had confirmed this supposition. Only one person had accused me, and that was Patience; and he had done so only to his two friends, Marcasse and the abbé Aubert, whom he had bound to secrecy by an oath.

"I need not tell you," added Marcasse, "that the abbé is absolutely silent, and refuses to believe you guilty. As for me, I can swear to you that never — "

"Silence, silence!" I cried; "do not say even that; it would seem to imply that some one in the world might believe it. But Edmée must have said something unheard of to Patience at the moment that she was dying, — for she is dead; you are trying to deceive me in vain, — she is dead, and I shall see her no more!"

"She is not dead!" cried Marcasse.

The oaths with which he confirmed his statement convinced me, for I knew that he would have tried in vain to lie; his whole nature would have revolted against his charitable intentions. As for Edmée's words, he frankly refused to repeat them, and this told me that they were withering. After this I got up; Marcasse tried to make me stay in bed, but I repulsed him firmly. I had the [horse] belonging to the farm saddled, and set off at full [gallop]. When I arrived at the chateau, I looked like a

spectre. I dragged myself to the drawing-room without meeting any one excepting Saint-Jean, who cried out with terror on seeing me, and disappeared without answering my questions.

The drawing-room was empty. Edmée's loom, buried under the green cloth, — which perhaps her hand would never lift again, — reminded me of a coffin under a pall. My uncle's great arm-chair was no longer in the corner of the hearth; my portrait, which I had had taken in Philadelphia, and had sent to my friends during the American war, was removed from the wall. These were the indications of death and malediction.

I left the room quickly, and went up stairs with the boldness which innocence gives, but with despair in my soul. I went straight to Edmée's room, and opened the door without knocking. Mademoiselle Leblanc came to meet me, but, on seeing who it was, she uttered loud cries, and fled, hiding her face in her hands, as if I had been a ferocious beast. Who had originated the frightful suspicions which I saw in every face? Had the abbé been so faithless as to do so? I learned later that Edmée, although steadfast and generous in her lucid moments, had accused me loudly in her delirium.

I approached her bed, and, almost delirious myself, without thinking that my unexpected appearance might give her her death-blow, I drew aside the curtains with an eager hand, and gazed upon her. Never had I beheld beauty more surprising. Her great black eyes had become larger than ever, and shone with an extraordinary brilliancy, although without expression, like diamonds; her cheeks, drawn and colorless, and her lips as white as her cheeks, made her look like a beautiful marble bust. She gazed at me steadily, with as little emotion as if she had been looking at a picture or a piece of furniture; and then, turning her face a little towards the wall, she said, with a mysterious smile, —

"It is the flower that is called *Edmea Sylvestris*."

I fell upon my knees, — I took her hand, — I covered it with kisses, — I burst into sobs; she paid no attention to anything. Her hand, still and cold, rested in mine like a piece of alabaster.

XXIII.

THE abbé entered, and bowed to me sadly and coldly; then, making me a sign that he wished to speak to me, he drew me from the bed.

"You are a madman!" he said. "Return to your home. Be prudent enough not to come here; it is all that remains for you to do."

"And since when," I cried, flying into a passion, "have you had the right to drive me from my family?"

"Alas! you have no longer a family," he answered, in a tone of grief that disarmed me. "Of father and daughter there only remain two phantoms, whose moral life is extinct, and whose physical life will soon forsake them. Respect the last moments of those whom you have loved."

"And how can I show my respect and grief by abandoning them?" I asked, deeply moved.

"Upon that point," said the abbé, "I have neither the wish nor the right to speak, for you know that your presence here is a piece of temerity and profanation. When they are no more (and their death cannot long be delayed), if you have any rights in this house, you can return to it; and, certainly, you will not find me here either to dispute them with you or to confirm them. In the meanwhile, as I do not acknowledge those rights, I think that I can take the responsibility of insisting that the dying moments of these two saints should be respected to the last."

"Wretch!" I cried, "I do not know what keeps me from tearing you into pieces! What fury drives you to plunge a dagger into my bosom twenty times? Do you fear that I shall survive my misfortune? Do you not know that three coffins will be taken together from this house? Do you suppose that I came here for anything excepting a last look and a last benediction?"

"Say a last pardon," replied the abbé, in a stern voice, and with a gesture of inexorable condemnation.

"I say that you are a fool!" I cried; "and that, if you were not a priest, I would crush you in my hand, for the way that you speak to me."

"I am not afraid of you, monsieur," he answered. "To deprive me of life would be to do me a great service; but I am sorry that you should confirm the accusations under which you lie by your threats and violence. If I saw you touched with repentance, I would weep with you; but your assurance fills me with horror. Hitherto I have looked upon you as a furious madman; I now begin to regard you as a villain. Retire!"

I fell upon a sofa, suffocated with rage and grief. For an instant I hoped that I would die. Edmée was dying by my side; and confronting me was a judge so convinced of my guilt, that, although gentle and timid by nature, he had suddenly become rude and implacable! What could console me for such misfortunes? Nothing but the horrible accusation weighing upon me, aroused my energy. I could not believe that such an accusation would stand for a single moment against the voice of truth. I imagined that a word, a look, from me would be enough to silence it forever; but I was so prostrated, so deeply wounded, that every means of defence was denied me. The more I suffered from the disgrace of the suspicion cast upon me, the more I understood how almost impossible it is to defend one's self successfully with no other help than that of pride and unacknowledged innocence.

I remained crushed, without being able to utter a word. It seemed to me that a mountain of lead was weighing upon my brain. The door opened, and Mademoiselle Leblanc, approaching with a malignant and bombastic manner, told me that a person on the staircase was asking to speak to me. I went out mechanically, and found Patience: he was awaiting me with his arms crossed upon his breast, in his austerest attitude, and with an expression of face which, had I been guilty, would have forced me to feel respect and fear.

"Monsieur de Mauprat," he said, "it is necessary that I should have a private conversation with you; will you follow me to my house?"

"Yes, I will," I answered; "I will endure every humiliation, provided that I can learn what you want of me, and why you take pleasure in insulting the most unfortunate of men. Go, Patience, — and go quickly. I am in haste to return here."

Patience walked sternly before me; and when we arrived at his little house we saw my poor sergeant, who had just arrived, also, with all speed. Finding no horse on which to follow me, and not wishing to leave me, he had come on foot, and so quickly, that he was covered with perspiration. He arose, however, with energy from the bench on which he had thrown himself under a vine-clad arbor, and came to meet us.

"Patience!" he cried, in a dramatic tone that would have made me smile, if it had been possible to feel even a gleam of cheerfulness at such a moment. "Old fool! — calumniator at your age? Fie! fie! monsieur — lost by fortune — you are — yes."

Patience, still unmoved, shrugged his shoulders, and said to his friend, —

"Marcasse, you do not know what you are saying. Go and rest at the end of the orchard. You have nothing to do here, and I must speak to your master alone. Go — I desire it," he added, pushing him away with an air of authority to which the sergeant, although proud and sensitive, yielded as usual — instinctively.

When we were alone, Patience went into an examination, to which I resolved to submit, the sooner to obtain, myself, an explanation of what was going on about me.

"Will you have the goodness to tell me, monsieur," he said, "what you intend doing at present?"

"I intend to remain with my family," I answered, "as long as I have a family; and when I no longer have one, what I intend to do can interest no one."

"But, monsieur," replied Patience, "if you are informed that you cannot remain with your family without giving a death-blow to one, and perhaps to both, of its members, would you persist in remaining?"

"If I were convinced that this was so," I answered, "I would not appear before them; but I would await at

their door until the last day of their life, or that of their recovery, to implore them to give me back a tenderness that I have never ceased to merit — "

"Ah! that is your position!" said Patience, with a scornful smile; "I should not have believed it possible. I am very glad, however, — my own course will be clearer."

"What do you mean?" I cried. "Speak, wretch! Explain yourself."

"You are the only wretch here," he answered coldly, seating himself upon his only chair, while I remained standing before him.

I wished, at any price, to make him explain himself. I restrained my anger, therefore, — I even had the humility to say that I would listen to good advice, if he would consent to repeat to me the words that Edmée had uttered immediately after the accident, and what she had said in her fever.

"No, certainly," replied Patience; "you are not worthy to hear a word from that mouth, and I will not be the one to repeat them to you. What need have you to know them? Do you hope, hereafter, to conceal anything from men? God saw you: from Him you can hide nothing. Depart, — remain at la Roche Mauprat, — keep quiet; and when your uncle is dead, and your affairs have been put in order, quit the country. If you will follow my advice, quit it at once. I do not want to have you prosecuted, — at least unless you force me to do so by your conduct. But others besides me have, if not the certainty, at least a suspicion of the truth. Before two days have passed, a word said by chance in public, the indiscretion of a servant, may direct the attention of justice to you; and from thence to the scaffold, when one is guilty, there is but one step. I do not hate you, — I have even had an affection for you; listen, then, to the good advice which you said you were disposed to receive. Depart, or keep concealed and ready for flight. I do not wish you to come to destruction; Edmée did not desire it, either; — thus — do you understand?"

"You are beside yourself to suppose that I would lis-

ten to such advice. I — conceal myself! I — fly like a criminal! What are you thinking of? Go on! go on! I defy you all! I do not know what fury and what hatred possesses you — leagues you against me; I do not know why you wish to keep me from seeing my uncle and my cousin: but I despise your folly. My place is here. I will only depart on receiving a formal order from my cousin or uncle; and, still further, I must hear them give that order with their own lips; I will not allow it to be brought to me by any stranger. Thus, then, thanks for your wisdom, Monsieur Patience; mine, here, will suffice. Farewell!"

I turned to leave the hut, when he threw himself before me, and for a moment seemed disposed to detain me by force. In spite of his advanced age, in spite of my great height and athletic strength, he was still capable of meeting me in a struggle of this kind, perhaps with advantage. Small, wiry, large in the shoulders, he was a Hercules. He paused, however, at the very moment when about lifting his arm against me, and, seized with one of those paroxysms of intense sensibility to which he was subject, even in the moments of his greatest rudeness, he looked at me with a softened expression, and spoke with tenderness:

"Unhappy young man!" he said, "you whom I have loved like my own child, — for I looked upon you as Edmée's brother, — do not rush to your destruction. I implore you, in the name of her whom you have assassinated, and whom you still love, — I know it, — but whom you must never see again. Believe me, your family, only yesterday, was a stately vessel, and you were at the helm; to-day it is a shipwrecked vessel, which has no longer either a sail or pilot, — the cabin-boys must work the ship, as friend Marcasse says. Ah, well! my poor shipwrecked mariner, do not persist in drowning yourself; I throw you a rope, — take it; a day longer, and it will be too late. Think! think! If you are arrested, he who is trying to-day to save you, will be compelled to-morrow to accuse you and condemn you. Do not force me to do a thing, the mere thought of which wrings

tears from my eyes. Bernard, you were loved, my child; live, even now, upon the past!"

I burst into tears, and the sergeant, who entered at this moment, began to weep also, and implore me to return to la Roche Mauprat; but soon I regained my composure, and pushed them both away.

"I know that you are excellent men," I said; "I know that you are generous, and love me well, since you can still think of saving my life, although believing me guilty of a frightful crime. But be reassured, my friends: I am guiltless of this crime; and I desire, above all things, that investigations which will absolve me should be made, — be sure of this. I owe it to my family to live until my honor has been reëstablished; then, if I am condemned to see my cousin, — the only person in the world whom I love, — perish, I will blow my brains out. Why, then, should I be cast down? I do not care for life. May God render gentle and serene the last hours of her whom I certainly shall not survive! It is all that I ask of Him."

Patience shook his head with a gloomy and discontented expression. He was so convinced of my guilt, that all my assertions of innocence only served to deprive me of his pity. Marcasse would have loved me even if I had been guilty; but I had no guarantee of my innocence in the whole world, excepting my own word.

"If you return to the chateau, you must swear first that you will not enter your cousin's or your uncle's room, without the consent of the abbé."

"I swear that I am innocent," I replied, "and that I will not permit myself to be convicted of guilt by any one. Back, both of you! leave me. Patience, if you consider it your duty to denounce me, go and do it; all that I ask is not to be condemned without being heard, — I prefer the tribunal of law to that of opinion."

I rushed out of the cottage, and returned to the chateau. However, not wishing to make a scandal among the servants, and knowing well that they could not conceal Edmée's true state from me, I went immediately and shut myself up in my own room. Towards evening, I came out to inquire about the two invalids,

when Mademoiselle Leblanc again told me that some one was asking for me. There was a mingled expression of fear and satisfaction upon her face; I comprehended that they had come to arrest me, and I felt a presentiment (which proved true) that Mademoiselle Leblanc had denounced me. I went to the window, and saw some horsemen of the *maréchaussée*.

"It is well!" I said; "my destiny must be accomplished."

But, before quitting, perhaps forever, this house in which I left my soul, I wished to see Edmée for the last time. I went straight to her room. Mademoiselle Leblanc tried to throw herself before the door. I pushed her away so rudely that she fell, and, I believe, hurt herself a little. She filled the house with her cries; and made a great to-do a little later, during my trial, about what she was pleased to term my attempt to assassinate her. I entered Edmée's room, and found the abbé and a physician there. I listened in silence to what the latter said. I learned that Edmée's wounds were not mortal in themselves, and would not have been very serious if a violent irritation of the brain had not complicated the evil, and made him fear tetanus. This terrible word fell upon my heart like a death-sentence. I had seen a great many persons in America die of this frightful malady, in consequence of wounds received in battle. I approached the bed. The abbé was in such a state of grief that he did not think of preventing me. I took Edmée's hand, still cold and lifeless. I kissed it a last time; and, without saying a word to the others, went and gave myself up to the *maréchaussée*.

XXIV.

I WAS thrown immediately into the provost-prison at la Chatre; the prosecuting attorney of the district of Issoudun commenced an investigation of the assassination of Mademoiselle de Mauprat, and obtained permission to have a monitory published on the next day. He went to the village of Saint Sévère, and to the farms in

the neighborhood of the woods of Curat, where the event had occurred, and received the depositions of more than thirty witnesses. A formal writ was issued against me eight days after my arrest. If my mind had not been so preoccupied, or if any one had been interested in me, this illegal step, and many others which occurred during my trial, might have been made powerful arguments in my favor, and would have proved that some secret hatred was urging on the prosecution. In the whole course of this affair an invisible hand directed all the proceedings with an implacable swiftness and severity.

The first examination produced only a single charge against me, — that of Mademoiselle Leblanc. While all the hunters declared that they knew nothing, and had no reason to regard this accident as a deliberate assault, Mademoiselle Leblanc, who had hated me of old on account of the jokes that I had played at her expense, and who, besides, had been bribed, as we learned afterwards, declared that Edmée, on recovering from her first swoon, — being without fever, and reasoning clearly, — had confided to her, begging her to keep the secret, that she had been insulted, threatened, dragged from her horse, and finally shot by me. This wicked woman, taking advantage of the revelations that Edmée had made in her fever, had composed, with a good deal of skill, a consistent narrative, which she embellished with all the wealth of her hate. Perverting the vague words and delirious impressions of her mistress, she affirmed, upon oath, that Edmée had seen me point my rifle at her, saying, "I have sworn it, — you shall die only by my hand."

Saint-Jean, examined the same day, declared that he knew nothing, excepting what Mademoiselle Leblanc had told him in the evening; and his statements agreed exactly with the preceding deposition. Saint-Jean was an honest man, but he was cold and narrow-minded. He was so precise and orderly, that he omitted none of the idle details which might be interpreted to my disadvantage. He affirmed that I had always been strange, turbulent, and whimsical; that I was subject to headaches

that deprived me of my senses, and had already had several nervous attacks, in which I had spoken of blood and murder to a person whom I always thought I saw; and, finally, that my character was so violent that I was capable of throwing it mattered not what at any one's head, although I had never, to his knowledge, done so.

Such are the depositions which often decide life and death in criminal trials.

Patience was not to be found on the day of this inquiry. The abbé declared that his mind was so undecided about the event, that he would submit to all the penalties of contumacious witnesses rather than express an opinion before obtaining fuller information. He urged the prosecuting attorney to give him time, promising on his honor that he would not attempt to evade the rights of justice, — representing that he might arrive at some conviction, after examining things for a few days, and engaging in that case to give his testimony clearly, whether for or against me. This delay was granted.

Marcasse said that if I had wounded Mademoiselle de Mauprat, which he was beginning seriously to doubt, I had, at least, done so unintentionally. He staked his honor and life upon this assertion.

This was the result of the first examination. It was continued from time to time for a number of days; and several false witnesses swore that they had seen me shoot Mademoiselle de Mauprat, after having attempted, in vain, to make her submit to my brutality.

One of the most fatal instruments of the ancient criminal process was the monitory: this was a notice thrown into the form of a sermon, given by the bishop, and repeated by all the curates to the people of their respective parishes, enjoining them to search out and reveal any facts which they could discover about the crime under investigation. This was merely a modification of the inquisitorial principle which reigned more openly in other countries. For the most part, the monitory, instituted to encourage the business of informers in the name of religion, was a masterpiece of ridiculous atrocity; it often contained a full account of the crime

and all the imaginary circumstances which it was the object of the plaintiff to prove; it was the publication of a theme ready-made, by means of which any rogue, to get a little money, could make a false deposition in the interest of the highest bidder. One inevitable effect of the monitory, when it was drawn up with partiality, was to excite public hatred against the accused. The devout, above all, receiving their opinions ready-made from the clergy, pursued the victim with fury; this is what happened in my case, and so much the more, as the clergy of the province played in it a secret part that almost decided my fate.

The cause was now transferred to the criminal court of the presidency of Bourges, and proceedings were commenced in a very few days.

You can imagine the gloomy despair in which I was plunged. Edmée's condition became more and more deplorable, — her mind was completely gone. I felt no anxiety about the result of the trial, for I did not think it would be possible to convict me of a crime which I had not committed; but what mattered honor and life to me if Edmée did not regain her faculties, so that I might be reëstablished in her opinion. I felt that she was dead, and had died cursing me. I had fully determined, consequently, to kill myself as soon as my sentence, whatever it might be, was pronounced. I considered it my duty to live until then, and to do what I could to insure the triumph of the truth; but I was in such a state of stupor that I did not even inquire what was to be done. Had it not been for the intelligence and zeal of my lawyer, and the admirable devotion of Marcasse, my carelessness would have had the most fatal results.

Marcasse busied himself all day long in running hither and thither about my affairs. In the evening he came and threw himself upon a bundle of straw at the foot of my prison-bed; and, after giving me news of Edmée and my uncle, whom he went to see every day, told me the result of his efforts. I pressed his hand tenderly; but absorbed by what he had told me about Edmée, I seldom heard anything else.

The prison of la Chatre, ancient fortress of the Elevains de Lombaud, seigneurs of the province, was, at that time, nothing but a formidable square tower, blackened by ages, and planted upon a rock overlooking a ravine in the valley of the Indre, narrow, winding, and rich, with the most beautiful vegetation. The season was magnificent. My room, in the extreme top of the tower, received the rays of the rising sun, which threw from one horizon to the other the slender and gigantic shadows of a triple row of poplar-trees. Never did a country more cheerful, fresh and pastoral, invite the gaze of a prisoner; but what could I enjoy? Words of death and shame sounded in every breeze that blew over the wall-flowers clinging to the fissured walls. Each rustic sound, each refrain of a bagpipe that reached me, seemed to utter an insult, or declare a profound scorn for my grief. There was nothing, even to the bleating of the flocks, that did not appear to me an expression of forgetfulness or indifference.

Marcasse had for some time had a fixed idea; he thought that Edmée had been wounded by Jean de Mauprat. That may have been, but as I had no way of proving it, I ordered him to be silent whenever he spoke to me on the subject. I did not choose to seek to exculpate myself at the expense of others. Although Jean de Mauprat was capable of anything, it was possible that he had never thought of committing this crime, and, as I had not heard him spoken of for more than six weeks, it seemed to me that it would be cowardly to accuse him. I persisted in believing that one of the hunters had fired at Edmée by mistake, and that he was prevented, by fear and shame, from acknowledging his misfortune. Marcasse had the courage to go to one and all of them, and implore them, with all the eloquence with which heaven had endowed him, not to stand in fear of the penalty that is inflicted for an accidental murder, and not to allow an innocent man to be accused in their place. All these efforts were useless; the replies of the hunters left my poor friend no hope of obtaining from them an explanation of the mystery that enveloped us.

I was transferred to Bourges, to the ancient chateau of the Dukes of Berry, which had been turned into a prison. It was a great grief to me to be separated from my faithful sergeant. He would have been allowed to follow me, but he was afraid of being arrested, at the suggestion of my enemies (he persisted in believing that I was pursued by secret enemies), so as to make it impossible for him to serve me. He did not want to lose an instant in continuing his researches, as long as he had not been apprehended. Two days after my departure for Bourges, Marcasse produced a declaration, drawn up at his instance by two notaries of la Chatre, and containing the depositions of ten witnesses, proving that a mendicant friar had been prowling about Varenne, several days previous to that of the assassination; that he had been seen at different points near the place where it had occurred, and especially had slept at Notre Dame de Pouligny on the previous evening. Marcasse believed that this monk was Jean de Mauprat. Two women testified that they thought they had recognized him, either for Jean or Gaucher de Mauprat, who greatly resembled Jean. But this Gaucher had been drowned in a pond, on the day after the capture of the donjon; and the whole city of la Chatre, on the day of the assault upon Edmée, had seen the Trappist engaged from morning until night, together with the Carmelite prior, in managing the procession and the ceremonies of the pilgrimage of Vaudevant; so that these depositions, far from being favorable to me, had the worst effect, and threw odium upon my defence. The Trappist proved his alibi victoriously, and the prior of the Carmelites helped him to spread the report that I was an infamous villain. This was a time of triumph for Jean de Mauprat; he proclaimed aloud that he had come to submit himself to the laws, in order to suffer the punishment due to his past crimes, but no one admitted the possibility of prosecuting such a holy man. He inspired so much fanaticism in our province, which was eminently devout, that no magistrate would have dared brave public opinion by being severe upon him. In his depositions Marcasse related the mysterious and inexplicable appearance of the

Trappist at la Roche Mauprat, the steps he had taken to intrude upon M. Hubert and his daughter, his insolence in terrifying them in their house, and the efforts of the Carmelite prior to obtain considerable sums from me in favor of this personage. All this was treated like a romance, for Marcasse acknowledged that he himself had not seen any of the apparitions of the Trappist; and neither the chevalier nor his daughter were in a state to be questioned. It is true that my answers, at my various examinations, confirmed everything that he had said; but as I declared with perfect sincerity that for two months the Trappist had given me no cause of anxiety or discontent, and as I refused to attribute the assault to him, it seemed, for several days, as if Jean de Mauprat would be forever reëstablished in public opinion. The clemency that I showed in my dealings with him did not soften the animosity of my judges. They employed the arbitrary power which the judiciary possessed, especially in secluded provinces, and paralyzed all the efforts of my lawyer by a ferocious haste. Several lawyers, whom I will not name, volunteered certain declamations, even in public, that ought to have excluded them from any dignified or moral tribunal. They engaged in intrigues to lead me to make revelations, and almost promised me a favorable judgment if I would acknowledge, at least, that I had wounded Mademoiselle de Mauprat by accident. The scorn with which I listened to these overtures set them completely against me. A stranger to all intrigue, at a time when even justice and truth could not triumph without it, I was the victim of two formidable enemies, — the clergy and the lawyers: the former I had offended in the person of the Carmelite friar, the latter hated me on account of Edmée's rejection of several of their number, the most rancorous of whom was a near relative of the chief judge.

There were several incorruptible men, however, to whom I was almost unknown, who took an interest in my fate, on account of the efforts which were made to render me odious. One of these, M. E——, who was not without influence, — he was the brother of the lord lieutenant of the province, and was in relations with all

allusion to the holy man before the bar, who, from a great sinner, has become a great saint. But at what price," she continued, turning to the court, "had this miserable bandit rescued my poor mistress? He had dishonored her, gentlemen, and the poor young lady, inconsolable for her misfortune, has passed her days ever since in tears and shame. Too proud to confide in any one, and too honest to deceive any man, she broke off her engagement with M. de la Marche, whom she loved passionately, as he did her, and has refused all offers of marriage made her for seven years, and all from a sense of honor, for she detested M. Bernard. At first she wanted to kill herself. There was a little hunting-knife, belonging to her father, which was sharpened by her order (M. Marcasse, yonder, can confirm what I say, if he chooses), and she would certainly have carried out her purpose, if I had not thrown it into the well. She had to defend herself, also, against being attacked in the night by her persecutor; she always put her knife, as long as she had it, under her pillow; she bolted the door of her room every evening; and several times I have seen her rush in, pale, out of breath, and ready to faint, like a person who has been pursued, and has had a great fright. In proportion as this gentleman began to be educated, and to learn good manners, mademoiselle, seeing that she could not marry any one else, for he always talked of killing any one who paid court to her, hoped that he would correct his ferocity, and was very kind and good to him. She took care of him in his sickness, not because she loved and esteemed him so much as M. Marcasse was pleased to say in his version of the story, but because she was afraid that he would betray her secret in his delirium, before the servants and before her father; for she took the greatest pains to conceal what had happened, out of shame and pride. All the ladies here will understand that. When the family went to pass the winter of '77 at Paris, M. Bernard again became jealous and despotic, and threatened so often to kill M. de la Marche, that mademoiselle had to dismiss him. After that she had violent scenes with Bernard, and declared that she did not love him, and

would never love him. What with anger and grief, — for it cannot be denied that he loved her like a tiger, — he went to America, and, during the six years that he passed there, he seemed, as far as we could judge from his letters, to be very much improved. When he returned, mademoiselle had made up her mind to live single, and had grown very quiet in her manners. M. Bernard, also, had become quite well behaved; but, by seeing her every day, leaning over her chair all the time, holding her skeins of wool, and talking to her quietly, while her father was asleep, he fell so much in love again that he lost his senses. I do not wish to accuse him too harshly, the poor wretch, and I think his place is in the *Petits-Maisons* rather than on the scaffold. He used to cry and groan all night long; and wrote her such stupid letters, that she never answered them, and could not read them without a smile. For the rest, here is one of these letters, which I found about her after she was shot; it had been pierced by a ball, and stained with blood; but enough can still be read to show that monsieur often had the intention of killing mademoiselle."

She produced a piece of half burned, half bloody paper, at the sight of which the audience shuddered with horror, — whether with real or affected emotion.

Before it was read, Mademoiselle Leblanc went on with her evidence; her concluding assertions troubled me deeply, for I could no longer distinguish the dividing line between reality and perfidy.

"Ever since her accident," she said, "mademoiselle has always been between life and death. She will never recover, whatever her physicians may say. I venture to assert that these gentlemen, who only see her at certain hours, do not understand her malady as well as I do, who have never left her, day or night. They pretend that her wounds are better, but that her mind is deranged. I say, for my part, that her wounds are worse, while her mind is less deranged than they say. Mademoiselle is very seldom delirious, and, when she is so, it is in the presence of these gentlemen, who trouble and frighten her. She makes such efforts not to seem out of her mind, that she

becomes so; but, when she is left alone with me, or with Saint-Jean, or with M. Abbé, who could very easily have told you all about her if he had chosen, she becomes once more calm, gentle, and sensible as usual. She says to us that she suffers excruciatingly, although she pretends to her physicians that she scarcely suffers at all at present. She speaks of her murderer with the generosity of a Christian, and repeats a hundred times a day, —

"'May God pardon him in the other world, as I pardon him in this! After all, he tried to kill me because he loved me. I was wrong not to marry him, he might have made me happy; I have driven him to despair, and he has revenged himself. Dear Leblanc, be careful not to betray the secret that I have confided to you. An indiscreet word would send him to the scaffold, and that would be the death of my father!'

"The poor young lady is far from imagining that things have gone so far that I have been summoned by law and religion to tell what I would rather conceal, and that instead of coming here to obtain an apparatus for her shower-bath, I have come to confess the truth. What consoles me is, that it will be easy to conceal everything from M. le Chevalier, who is as unconscious as a new-born infant. For my part, I have done my duty — God be my judge."

After speaking thus with perfect assurance and great volubility, Mademoiselle Leblanc resumed her seat in the witness-box amid a murmur of approbation, and the clerk was summoned to read the letter found upon Edmée.

It was the last letter that I had written to her, only a few days before the fatal day. They handed it to me; I could not help carrying the impression of Edmée's blood to my lips; then, casting my eyes over the writing, I returned the letter, answering, calmly, that it was mine.

The reading of this letter was my final blow. Fate, which seems ingenious in injuring its victims, had decreed (and perhaps an infamous hand had contributed to this mutilation) that the passages expressing my submission and respect should be destroyed. Certain poetic allusions,

explaining and excusing the exalted frenzy with which it was filled, were illegible. The lines that had remained intact, apparent to the eye and carrying conviction to every mind, were those that testified to the violence of my passion and to the ungovernable fury of my delirious transports. They were such phrases as these: "Sometimes I long to rise in the middle of the night, and go and kill you. I should have done so a hundred times already, if I was assured that I would not love you when you were dead. Be careful, for there are two men in me, and sometimes the brigand of old is stronger than my present self," etc. My enemies smiled with delight, my friends were demoralized, and even my poor sergeant looked at me despairingly. The public had already condemned me.

After this incident, the prosecuting attorney had a good chance to thunder forth a violent oration, in which he represented me as an incurable outlaw, the cursed shoot of a cursed trunk, and an example of the fatality of evil instincts. Then, after exerting himself to the utmost to make me an object of horror and fear, he tried, to give himself an appearance of generosity and impartiality, to arouse the compassion of the judges in my favor. He undertook to prove that my mind, bewildered in my childhood by atrocious spectacles and wicked principles, was not sane, and could never have been so, whatever had been my circumstances, and the development of my passions. Finally, after displaying his philosophy and rhetoric to the great delight of the audience, he concluded by demanding against me a judgment of lunacy, and solitary confinement for life.

Although my lawyer was a man of heart and mind, my letter had taken him so completely by surprise, the audience was so unfavorably disposed towards me, and the court gave openly such signs of incredulity and impatience in listening to him (an indecent habit which is still practised in the courts of this country), that his defence was cold. All that he seemed justified in demanding forcibly, was an additional inquiry. He complained that all formalities had not been fulfilled, that several parts of the affair had not been sufficiently explained; that they were

making haste to judge a cause, several circumstances of which were still enveloped in mystery. He demanded that the physicians should be summoned, to state whether it would be possible to examine Mademoiselle de Mauprat. He proved that the most important, the only important testimony was that of Patience, and that Patience might appear any day and clear me. He demanded, finally, that search should be made for the mendicant friar, whose resemblance to the Mauprats had not yet been explained. It was the duty of the court, he asserted, to find out what had become of Antoine de Mauprat, and to make the Trappist explain himself upon this point. He complained bitterly that he had been deprived of all means of making a defence by being refused all delay, and had the boldness to affirm that improper motives had been concerned in the blind and indecent haste with which the trial had been conducted. The presiding judge called him to order. The prosecuting attorney proved that all legal formalities had been fulfilled; that the court was sufficiently enlightened; that a search for the mendicant friar would be a piece of folly, and in very bad taste; that Jean de Mauprat had proved the death of his only surviving brother, and that it had occurred several years before. The court withdrew: in about half an hour it returned, and pronounced against me a sentence which condemned me to capital punishment.

XXVI.

ALTHOUGH the haste and severity of this sentence were so iniquitous that it shocked even those who were the most violent against me, I received the blow with great calmness. I no longer felt the least interest in life. I recommended my soul, and the vindication of my good name, to God. I said to myself that I should meet Edmée in a better world, if she died; and, if she lived and recovered her reason, that she would some day learn the truth, and that then I should live again in her heart as a dear, although sorrowful recollection. Irritable as I

am, and naturally disposed to become violent, and even furious, when opposed or offended, I am surprised at the philosophical resignation and silent pride that I have displayed on the great occasions of my life, and above all on this one.

It was two o'clock in the morning: the session had lasted fourteen hours. The silence of death reigned in the assembly, which was as attentive and numerous as at the opening of the trial,— men are so eager for spectacles. That which the criminal court presented at this moment was gloomy enough. These men in red robes, as pale, as absolute, and implacable as the Council of Ten at Venice; these spectral women, adorned with flowers, looking in the ghastly light of the torches like phantoms of life floating in the galleries over the priests of death; the muskets of the guards gleaming in the shadowy background; the heart-broken attitude of my poor sergeant, who had fallen at my feet; the silent but intense joy of the Trappist, erect and indefatigable before the bar; the mournful sound of a convent bell, which was just then ringing matins somewhere in the neighborhood, amid the silence of the assembly; all this was enough to thrill the nerves of the wives of the farmers-general of the revenue, and to set the hearts of the couriers in the audience beating.

Suddenly, at the moment when the court was about to announce the close of the session and disperse, a figure, resembling in all respects what we imagine the peasant of the Danube to be, thick-set, in rags, bare-footed, with a long beard, with hair in disorder, with a broad and majestic forehead, and a dignified and stern expression, started up amid the flickering lights that gleamed over the crowd, and standing before the bar, said, in a hollow and emphatic voice,—

"I, Jean le Houx, called Patience, oppose this judgment as iniquitous in substance and illegal in form. I demand that it should be reviewed, so that I may give my evidence, which is necessary, sovereignly so, perhaps, and which should have been waited for."

"Why, if you have anything to say," cried the prose-

cuting attorney, angrily, "did you not appear when summoned? You are deceiving the court, by pretending that you have important communications to make."

"And you," replied Patience, speaking more slowly, and in a more emphatic voice than before, "are deceiving the public, by saying that I have not such communications to make; you know well that I must have them."

"Think where you are, witness, and recollect to whom you are speaking."

"I know well, and I shall not say too much. I declare here that I have important things to say, and that I should have said them in time, if the trial had not been improperly hurried forward. I wish to say them, and will say them; and, believe me, it is better that I should do so while it is possible to review the proceedings. This is even more important for the judges than for the prisoner, for the same moment that establishes his innocence will condemn them to disgrace; he will live again in honor, and they will die in infamy."

"Witness," said the irritated judge, "the bitterness and insolence of your language will be more injurious than advantageous to the accused."

"And who tells you that I am favorable to the accused?" said Patience, in a voice of thunder. "What do you know of me? How if it pleases me to convert an illegal and worthless sentence into a just and irrevocable one?"

"How reconcile this desire to make the laws respected," said the judge, actually shaken by the determination and energy of Patience, "to your disobedience to them in not appearing when summoned by the prosecution?"

"I did not choose to appear."

"There are severe penalties for those who do not choose to obey the laws."

"Possibly."

"Do you come here with the intention of submitting to them?"

"I come here to make you respect them."

"Take notice: unless you change your tone, I will have you sent to prison."

"Take notice: if you love justice and serve God, you must hear me, and suspend the execution of this sentence. It does not belong to him who brings the truth to humiliate himself before those who are seeking it. You who are listening to me, men of the people, you whom the great, without doubt, do not desire to make fools of, you whose voice is called the voice of God, join with me, espouse the cause of the truth, which is about to be stifled by deceptive appearances, or, if the prisoner is guilty, which is going to triumph by wicked means. Fall upon your knees, men of the people, my brothers, my children; pray, supplicate, insist that justice should be done and anger repressed. It is your duty, it is your right, it is your interest; it is you who are insulted and threatened when the laws are violated."

Patience spoke with such warmth, and with such evident and irresistible sincerity, that there was a sympathetic stir through the whole audience. Philosophy was then so fashionable among the young men of rank, that they were the first to respond to his appeal, although it had not been addressed to them. They arose with chivalric impetuosity and turned to the people, who also arose, carried away by this noble example. There was a furious clamor; and one and all, feeling their dignity and strength, forgot personal prejudices to unite in the common cause of justice. Thus a burst of noble enthusiasm, and a true word, are sometimes enough to bring the masses back to the right path, after they have been led astray by sophisms.

The reprieve was granted, and I was reconducted to my prison amid applause. Marcasse followed me. Patience, without giving me a chance to express my gratitude, slipped through the crowd and disappeared.

The review of my trial could not be made without an order from the supreme court of the kingdom. For my part, I had decided, before the sentence, that I would not apply to this court of last appeal of the ancient jurisprudence, but the appearance and words of Patience had acted upon me no less than upon the audience. The spirit of resistance and sentiment of human dignity, benumbed,

and almost paralyzed within me by grief, suddenly revived, and I felt at this hour that man is not made for that selfish concentration of despair which is called either abnegation or stoicism. No one can surrender regard for his own honor without abandoning respect for honorable principle. If it is noble to sacrifice personal glory and life to the mysterious decrees of the conscience, it is cowardly to abandon either the one or the other to the fury of an unjust persecution. I felt myself elevated in my own eyes, and I passed the rest of this important night in seeking the means of my vindication, with as much perseverance as I had before shown in resigning myself to fate. This feeling of energy awakened that of hope. Edmée, perhaps, was neither out of her senses, nor at the point of death. She might absolve me, — she might be cured.

"Who knows?" I said to myself; "perhaps she has already done me justice; perhaps it is she who sent Patience to my succor; I shall accomplish her wish, without doubt, by taking courage, and not allowing myself to be crushed by villains."

But how to obtain this order from the supreme court? Who would solicit the decree of the king, which was necessary? Who would hasten those hateful delays which the law, when it chooses, can interpose in the very same cases that it hurried forward with blind precipitation? Who would prevent my enemies from injuring me, and paralyzing all my efforts? Who would fight for me, in a word? The abbé alone would have been able to do so, but he was in prison upon my account. His generous conduct, during the trial, had proved that he was still my friend, but he was now helpless. What could Marcasse do, in his obscure position, and with his enigmatical language? Evening came, and I fell asleep with the hope of celestial aid, for I had prayed to God with fervor. Several hours of sleep refreshed me, and I was awakened by the noise of the drawing of bolts. O God of heaven! what was my rapture on beholding Arthur, my companion-in-arms, that other self, from whom I had not had a secret for six years, enter my cell and throw himself into my arms. I wept like a child on receiving this mark of the care of

Providence. Arthur did not accuse me; he had learned of the sad affair in which I was implicated while on a trip to Paris, on business for the Philadelphia Library. He had defended me against all my slanderers, and had not lost an instant in coming, either to save or to console me.

I poured out my soul to him with ecstacy, and told him how he could help me. He wanted to return to Paris by post that same evening; but I begged him to begin by going to Saint Sévère, to obtain news of Edmée; I had heard nothing for four mortal days, and Marcasse, moreover, had never given me such exact and minute details as I could have wished.

'Have no fear," said Arthur, "you shall learn the truth from me. I am quite a good surgeon; my eye is practised, and most likely I shall be able to tell you what you have to fear or hope. From there, I will go immediately to Paris."

He wrote me, on the third day, a long letter full of details.

Edmée was in a very extraordinary state. She did not talk at all, and did not seem to suffer, as long as she was spared any sort of nervous excitement; but, at the first word recalling her sorrows, she fell into convulsions. The moral isolation into which she had fallen, was the greatest obstacle to her cure. Her physical condition was abundantly provided for; she had two good physicians, and a very devoted nurse. Mademoiselle Leblanc also attended to her physical wants, with a great deal of zeal; but this dangerous woman often injured her by ill-timed reflections, and dangerous questions. Arthur still further assured me that Edmée, if she had ever believed me guilty, and had said so, must have done this in a previous period of her malady; since she had been in a state of complete torpor for at least fifteen days. She often lay in a sort of lethargy, but did not really sleep; she took a little simple nourishment, and never complained; when her physicians asked her if she was in pain, she replied by careless signs, that were always in the negative; she gave no indication of remembering any of the affections that had filled her life. Her tenderness for her father, however, — that

sentiment which had always been so deep and absorbing,— was not extinct; she often wept abundantly, and refused to be consoled; it was in vain that her attendants tried to make her understand that her father was not dead, as she seemed to believe. She was disturbed not by the noise (that she did not notice), but by any movement which was made around her, and begged, by her gestures, to be left quiet. Then, hiding her face in her hands, sinking back in her chair and becoming perfectly rigid, she abandoned herself to hopeless despair. This silent grief, which she no longer struggled against, and no longer seemed to wish to subdue, — this helplessness in one whose will, now drifting over a dead sea in a stagnant calm, had once been so firm that it could quell the most violent storms, — was, according to Arthur, the most melancholy spectacle that he had ever beheld. Edmée had become indifferent to life. Mademoiselle Leblanc, in the hope of arousing her, had been so grossly indiscreet as to tell her that her father was dead; she answered, by a nod, that she knew it. Several hours afterwards the physicians tried to make her understand that he was living; she replied, by another sign, that she did not believe it. They rolled the arm-chair of the chevalier into her room, they brought father and daughter together: they did not recognize each other; but, after a moment, Edmée, taking her father for a ghost, uttered piercing cries, and fell into convulsions that caused one of her wounds to open, and endangered her life. They had taken care, since then, to keep them apart, and not to say a word to Edmée about her father. She took Arthur for a physician of the country, and received him as she did those who were attending her, with gentleness and indifference. He had not ventured to speak to her about me, but he exhorted me not to despair. There was nothing in Edmée's condition over which time and rest might not triumph; she had little fever, none of her vital organs were seriously affected, her wounds were almost cured, and her brain was not threatened with derangement from an excess of activity. The debility of this organ, and prostration of her whole system, could not much longer resist, according to Arthur, the strength of

her youth, and an admirable constitution. He urged me, finally, to think of myself; my care and devotion might be useful to Edmée, and I might be made happy by regaining her affection and esteem.

In fifteen days Arthur returned from Paris with an order from the supreme court, for the review of my sentence. New witnesses were heard. Patience did not appear, but I received a scrap of paper from him with these words written upon it in an awkward hand: "You are not guilty — therefore hope." The physicians declared that Mademoiselle de Mauprat might be questioned without danger, but that she would not reply intelligently. Her health had improved. She had recognized her father, and no longer left his side. But, otherwise, she showed no interest in anything. She seemed to feel a great pleasure in taking care of him like a child, and, on his side, the chevalier recognized, from time to time, his cherished daughter; but the strength of the latter sensibly declined. They questioned him in one of his lucid intervals. He replied that his daughter had fallen from her horse, and had struck her breast on the trunk of a tree, but that no one had shot her, even by accident; and that only a fool could believe her cousin guilty of such a crime. When asked what he thought of his nephew's absence, he replied that his nephew was not absent, and that he saw him every day. Faithful to his respect for the reputation of a family become so greatly compromised, did he hope, by these childish falsehoods, to stop the investigations of justice? I have never known. Edmée could not be examined; at the first question that was asked, she shrugged her shoulders, and made a sign that she wished to be left quiet. The prosecuting attorney insisted, and became more explicit: she looked at him earnestly, and seemed trying to understand him. He pronounced my name; she uttered a loud cry, and fainted. He was obliged to desist. Arthur, however, did not despair. On the contrary, the account of this scene made him think that he might bring about a favorable crisis in Edmée's mental condition. He went immediately and established himself at Saint Sévère, where he remained for several

days without writing to me, which threw me into the greatest anxiety.

The abbé, questioned anew, refused to testify, calmly and briefly, as before.

My judges, seeing that the information promised by Patience did not arrive, hastened the proceedings in review, and by this repetition of their precipitancy proved anew their animosity against me. The appointed day arrived. I was devoured with anxiety. Arthur had written to me to hope, in a style as laconic as that of Patience. My lawyer had not succeeded in getting any favorable testimony of importance; I saw plainly that he was beginning to believe me guilty. His only hope was to obtain delays.

XXVII.

THE audience was still more numerous than at the first trial. The guard was forced at the doors of the court-house, and the crowd overran the premises clear up to the windows of the manor of *Jacques Cœur*, which is now the hotel of the city. I found myself very much agitated on this second occasion, although I had strength and pride enough not to let it appear. I felt an interest, now, in the success of my cause, and the hopes I had conceived did not seem likely to be realized. I experienced an indescribable uneasiness, a concentrated fury, a sort of hate against these men who would not open their eyes to my innocence, and against God, who seemed to have abandoned me.

In this violent state I had to make such an effort to appear calm, that I scarcely noticed what occurred. I recovered presence of mind enough, at my second examination, to answer in the same terms as at the first one. Then a funereal curtain seemed to stretch before me, a ring of iron encircled my forehead, I felt an icy cold sensation in the sockets of my eyes, I saw nothing, and only heard vague and incomprehensible sounds. I do not know what happened, I do not know whether the apparition was announced which suddenly struck me. I only remem-

ber that a door opened behind the judge's chair, that Arthur advanced leading in a veiled woman, that he took off her veil after seating her in a large easy-chair which the ushers rolled eagerly towards her, and that the audience uttered a cry of admiration on beholding Edmée's pale and sublime beauty.

At this moment I forgot the crowd, and the court, my cause, and the entire universe. I believe that no human power could have restrained my impetuous outburst. I rushed like a thunder-bolt within the enclosure of the bar, and falling at Edmée's feet, embraced her knees with passionate tenderness. I have since been told that this involuntary movement took the public by storm, and that almost all the women melted into tears. The young exquisites dared not joke; the judges were moved. For an instant the truth was completely victorious.

Edmée looked at me a long time. The insensibility of death was on her face. It seemed as if she would never recognize me. The audience waited in profound silence until she should give some expression either of her affection or hate. Suddenly she burst into tears, threw her arms about my neck, and lost consciousness. Arthur had her carried away immediately. They had some difficulty in making me return to my place. I no longer knew where I was; I clung to Edmée's dress, and wanted to follow her. Arthur addressed the court, and asked that the physicians who had examined the invalid in the morning should have another consultation. He demanded and obtained that Edmée should again be summoned to give her evidence, and be confronted with me when the attack which had seized her for the moment had passed off.

"This attack is not severe," he said; "Mademoiselle de Mauprat has had several of the same kind during the last few days, and during her journey. After each of these paroxysms her mind becomes clearer and clearer."

"Go and attend to the invalid," said the judge. "She shall be recalled in two hours, if you think that will be time enough to recover her from her swoon. In the meanwhile the court will hear the witness at whose request the first judgment was suspended."

Arthur withdrew, and Patience was introduced. He was dressed properly; but, after saying a few words, he declared that he could not continue unless he was allowed to take off his coat. His borrowed plumes embarrassed and heated him so much, that he was sweating freely. He scarcely waited for the sign of consent, accompanied by a smile of scorn given him by the presiding judge, to throw this badge of civilization to the floor; then, carefully rolling up his shirt-sleeves on his nervous arms, he spoke as follows: —

"I will speak the truth, the whole truth. I lift my hand a second time, for I have things to say which are contradictory, and which I cannot explain to myself. I swear before God and before men that I will say what I know, as I know it, without being influenced either for or against any one."

He raised his large hand, and turned to the people with simple trust, as if to say: "You hear what I say, and you know you can believe in me." His confidence was well founded. Since the concluding incident of my last trial the public had been greatly occupied by this extraordinary man, who had spoken before the court with so much audacity, and had harangued the people in its presence. His conduct inspired great curiosity and sympathy among all the democrats and friends of men. The works of Beaumarchais had just had a success among the upper classes, which will explain to you how it was that Patience, although opposed to all the authorities of the province, was sustained and applauded by all those who prided themselves upon their intelligence. They saw in him Figaro under a new form. The report of his virtues was widely spread; for, during my residence in America, the people of Varenne, as you know, had become acquainted with Patience, and had learned to look upon him as their benefactor. They called him the Great Judge, because he interposed voluntarily in quarrels, and terminated them to the satisfaction of both parties with admirable goodness and skill.

He spoke on this occasion in a loud and penetrating voice, in which every now and then fine chords could be

heard. His gestures, slow or animated, according to circumstances, were always noble and striking; his short, Socratic face, was always beautiful in expression. He had all the qualities of the orator, although he never displayed them out of vanity. He spoke in the clear and concise style that he had necessarily acquired in his more recent intercourse with men, and in discussing their practical interests.

"When Mademoiselle de Mauprat was shot," he said, "I was ten steps off, more or less; but the underwood is so thick in this place that I could see nothing two steps from me. They had urged me to join the hunt, but it did not amuse me. Finding myself near Gazeau Tower, where I had lived for twenty years, I felt like seeing my old cell again, and I was approaching it rapidly when I heard the shot: that did not frighten me at all; it is natural that there should be firing during a hunt! But when I came out of the thicket I found Edmée (pardon me, I am in the habit of calling her so; she regards me as a sort of foster-father), I found Edmée on her knees upon the ground, wounded, as you have been told, and still holding the bridle of her horse, which was rearing. She did not know how severe or how slight her injury was, but she had her other hand upon her breast, and she said, —

"'Bernard, this is frightful! I would never have believed that you could kill me. Bernard, where are you? Come and see me die. It will kill my father.'

"She fell altogether as she spoke, and let go the bridle of her horse. I rushed up to her.

"'Ah, Patience, you saw it then!' she said to me. 'Say nothing about it. Do not tell my father —'

"She stretched out her arms, and her body became rigid; I thought that she was dead, and she did not speak again until night, after the balls had been extracted from her breast."

"Did you at any time see Bernard de Mauprat?"

"I saw him on the very spot of the occurrence, at the moment when Edmée lost consciousness, and seemed at the point of death. He was like an idiot: I thought it

was remorse that was crushing him. I spoke to him harshly; I treated him like an assassin. He made no reply, and seated himself on the ground beside his cousin. He remained stupefied a long time after she had been taken away. Nobody thought of accusing him; the hunters thought that he had fallen from his horse, because they saw his horse running on the shore of the pond; they imagined that his rifle had gone off as he fell. M. l'Abbé Aubert was the only person who heard M. Bernard accused of having assassinated his cousin. For several days Edmée spoke from time to time, but I was not always present when she spoke, and besides, after the first moment, she was almost always delirious. I maintain that she confided to nobody (to Mademoiselle Leblanc least of all) what took place between herself and Monsieur de Mauprat before she was wounded. She confided in me no more than in the others. In the very rare moments when she was in her right mind, she replied to our questions that Bernard certainly had not shot her on purpose, and several times, during the first three days, she even asked to see him; but, when delirious, she cried,—

"'Bernard! Bernard! you have committed a great crime; you have killed my father!'

"She had got that idea into her head; she really thought that her father was dead, and she thought so for a long time. She, therefore, has said very few things of any importance. All the speeches that Mademoiselle Leblanc put into her mouth were false. After three days she stopped talking intelligently, and after eight days she sank into a lethargy, and became absolutely silent. She turned Mademoiselle Leblanc away seven days ago, when she recovered her reason, which plainly proves something against that chamber-maid. This is what I have to say against M. de Mauprat. I might have kept silent, but, having still other things to say, I wished to reveal the whole truth."

Patience paused: the audience, and the court itself, which was beginning to feel an interest in me, and to lose the bitterness of its prejudices, were thunderstruck at hearing evidence so different from what they had expected.

Patience resumed.

"I remained for several weeks," he said, "convinced of Bernard's guilt; but the more I thought about it the more dissatisfied I became; I said to myself, that a man so good and well educated as Bernard was,—a man for whom Edmée felt so much esteem, and whom M. le Chevalier loved as a son,—a man, in a word, who had such a love of justice and truth, could not, from one day to another, become a wretch. And then the idea occurred to me that some other Mauprat might have fired the gun. I do not speak of the Trappist," he added, seeking Jean de Mauprat, who was not present in the audience, "but of the one whose death was not proved, although the court thought proper to overlook this, and to believe it on the word of M. Jean de Mauprat."

"Witness," said the judge, "please to observe that you are not here to act as counsel for the accused, nor to review the decrees of the court. You are here to state what you know of the facts, and not to express your opinion about the case."

"Possibly," replied Patience; "I must tell you, however, why I did not wish to testify against Bernard at the first trial, having no proofs to offer, excepting those against him, and not feeling faith even in those proofs."

"You are not required to do so for the moment. Confine yourself to your evidence."

"A moment! I have my honor to defend, I have my own conduct to explain, if you please."

"You are not the accused; you are not before the bar to plead your own cause. If the court thinks it advisable to prosecute you for your disobedience, you will be notified to defend yourself; but at present that is not the question."

"The question is to make known to the court whether I am an honest man or a false witness. Pardon! It seems to me that this has something to do with the affair; the life of the accused depends upon it; the court cannot regard it as a matter of indifference."

"Go on," said the prosecuting attorney, "and endeavor to preserve the respect which you owe the court."

"I don't desire to offend the court," replied Patience; "I say merely that a man may refuse to obey an order of the court from conscientious motives which may be legally condemned, but which each judge in private can comprehend and excuse. I say, then, that I did not believe Bernard de Mauprat guilty; the evidence of my senses was not enough to convince me. Excuse me, gentlemen, in my way I am a judge myself. Inquire about me. In my village they call me the Great Judge. When my fellow-citizens beg me to settle a tavern quarrel, or to decide the boundary of a field, I do not listen so much to what they say as to my own thoughts. We do not form an opinion about people suddenly. There are many things that serve to show the truth or falsehood of the last act that is imputed to them. Thus, unable to believe that Bernard was an assassin, and learning from the testimony of more than ten persons, whom I consider incapable of false swearing, that a monk looking like the Mauprats had been in the country, having myself seen the back and frock of this monk passing at a distance at Pauligny on the morning of the assault, I wished to know whether he was still in Varenne, and I found out that he was here; that is to say that, after having left it, he had returned to the environs when the sentence was passed last month; and, what is more, I learned that he was acquainted with M. Jean de Mauprat. Who is this monk? I asked myself; why does his face terrify all the inhabitants of the country? What is he doing in Varenne? If he belongs to the convent of the Carmelites, why does he not wear their dress? If he belongs to the order of M. Jean, why is he not lodging with him at the Carmelites? If he is a begging friar, why does he not go further, after taking his collection, instead of coming to importune people who gave yesterday? If he is a Trappist, and does not want to remain at the Carmelites like the other, why does he not return to his convent? Who is this vagabond monk? and how is it that M. Jean de Mauprat, who has told several persons that he does not know him, knows him so well that they breakfast together from time to time, in a tavern at Crevant? I almost wished that my

deposition had been made, although in a measure it might have been injurious to Bernard, so that I might have the right to say what I have now said, although it should amount to nothing. But as you of the prosecution never give witnesses time to try and inform themselves about what they ought to believe, I started off straightway for the woods, where I live like a fox, promising myself that I would not quit them until I had discovered what this monk was doing in the country. I put myself upon his track, and I have discovered who he is: he is the assassin of Edmée de Mauprat, — he is called Antoine de Mauprat!"

This announcement caused a great stir in the court and audience. All eyes sought Jean de Mauprat, who was nowhere to be seen.

"What are your proofs?" said the judge.

"I am going to tell them," replied Patience. "Knowing from the tavern-keeper of Crevant, whom I have had occasion to serve, that the two Trappists breakfasted at his house from time to time, I went to lodge half a league off in a hermitage in the woods, abandoned to the first comer, lodging and furniture, and called *Le Trou aux Fades*. It is a cave in the rock, with nothing in it excepting a great stone that serves for a seat. I lived there two days on roots, and a little bread which they sent me from the tavern, where my principles would not allow me to stop. On the third day, the inn-keeper's little boy came to let me know that the two monks were sitting down to breakfast. I ran there and hid myself in a cellar opening on the garden. The door of this cellar is shaded by an apple-tree, under which these gentlemen breakfasted in the open air. M. Jean was sober; the other ate like a Carmelite, and drank like a Cordelier. I heard and saw all at my ease."

"'It is time for this thing to end,' said Antoine, whom I easily recognized when I saw him drink and heard him swear; 'I am tired of the part you make me play. Give me an asylum at the Carmelites, or I will make a disturbance.'

"'What disturbance can you make that will not take

you to the wheel, stupid beast?' replied M. Jean. 'Be very sure not to set your foot into the Carmelites; I am not at all anxious to be implicated in a criminal suit, and they would find you out there in three hours.'

"'Why so, pray? You make them believe that you are a saint!'

"'I can behave like a saint, and you behave like a fool. You cannot keep from swearing and breaking the glasses after dinner for a single hour.'

"'Say then, Nepomucène; do you hope you will get off quite clear if I am tried?' replied the other.

"'Who knows?' answered the Trappist. 'I took no part in your folly, and advised nothing of the kind.'

"'Oh, ho! What a good apostle!' cried Antoine, falling back in his chair, in fits of laughter; 'you are very well content, now that it is done. You always were a coward, and, without me, you would have thought of nothing better than to go and become a Trappist, to ape devotion, and get absolution from the past, so that you might have the right to draw a little money from the Casse-Têtes of Saint Sévère. On my word, a fine ambition! To die in a monk's frock, after being uncomfortable all your life, and only half enjoying the pleasures of life, besides having to hide like a mole! No, no! when they have hung the handsome Bernard, when the beautiful Edmonde is dead, and when the old Break-Neck has laid his big bones in the ground; when we have inherited that pretty little fortune, you will find out that it was a beautiful *coup de Jarnac*, to get rid of them all three at the same time! It will give me a great deal of trouble to play the devout, since I have none of the convent habits, and don't know how to wear the dress; so I shall throw off the frock, and content myself with building a chapel at la Roche Mauprat, and receiving the communion four times a year.'

"'Everything you have done in this whole affair is a folly and infamy!'

"'Bah! don't talk of infamy, my dear brother, or I will make you swallow this bottle, all sealed.'

"'I say that it is a great piece of foolishness, and that,

if it succeeds, you owe a splendid candle to the Virgin; if it does not succeed, I wash my hands of it; do you understand? When I was concealed in the secret chamber of the donjon, and heard Bernard telling his valet, after supper, that he was going crazy for the beautiful Edmée, I told you that here was a chance to strike a good blow; and, like a brute, you took it seriously, and went, without consulting me, and without waiting a favorable moment, and did a thing which should have been weighed and matured.'

"'A favorable moment, you white-livered fellow! How should I have found it? The occasion makes the thief. I was surprised by the hunt in the woods, and went and hid myself in that cursed Gazeau Tower; I saw my two turtle doves arrive; I heard a conversation to make one burst with laughing, — Bernard weeping, the girl playing the proud; Bernard went off, like a fool, without doing the part of a man; I found about me, the good God knows how, a rascal of a pistol, all loaded. Paf! —'

"'Silence, wild beast!' cried the Trappist, frightened to death; 'are these the sort of things to talk about in a tavern? Hold your tongue, wretch, or I will never see you again!'

"'You will have to see me, however, my good brother, when I come and play tunes on the bells at the gates of the Carmelites.'

"'If you come there I will denounce you.'

"'You will take very good care not to denounce me; I know too much about you.'

"'I am not afraid of you; I have proved my repentance; I have expiated my sins.'

"'Hypocrite!'

"'Come, be silent, fool!' said the other; 'I must really go. Here is some money.'

"'All that!'

"'What do you expect a monk to give you? Do you think I am rich?'

"'Your Carmelites are, and you make them do whatever you choose.'

"'I might give you more, but I shall not do it. With two louis you would get into a debauch, and make an uproar that would betray you.'

"'If you wish me to leave the country for some time, how do you expect me to travel?'

"'Have I not three times already given you enough to go with, and have you not returned after throwing it away in the first drinking hole on the frontier of the province? How dare you show your face here, after the evidence that has been given against you, when the *maréchaussée* are on the look-out, when Bernard is having his sentence reviewed, and when, in a word, you are on the very point of being discovered? Your impudence is revolting!'

"'That is your look-out, my good brother; you lead the Carmelites, the Carmelites lead the bishop, for some reason, God knows what; some folly or other committed together, in great secrecy, after supper, in their convent—'"

Here the judge interrupted the narrative of Patience.

"Witness," he said, "I call you to order; you insult the virtue of a prelate by the scandalous report of such a conversation."

"Not at all," replied Patience; "I report the invectives of a drunkard and assassin against the prelate; I take nothing upon myself, and every one here knows what he has to rely upon; but, if you choose, I will say nothing more upon this subject. There was still quite a long discussion. The real Trappist wanted to make the false Trappist depart, and the latter persisted in remaining, on the plea that his brother, if he was not upon the spot, would have him arrested as soon as Bernard was beheaded, so as to have the inheritance for himself alone. Jean, driven to extremity, threatened seriously to denounce him and deliver him up to justice.

"'Enough! You will take good care not to do it, after all,' replied Antoine; 'for if Bernard is acquitted, adieu the inheritance.'

"It was thus that they separated. The true Trappist went off very much disturbed, the other fell asleep, with

his elbows on the table. I came from my hiding-place, and was going to have him arrested. It was at this moment that the *maréchaussée*, who had been at my heels for a long time, to force me to come and testify, seized me by my throat. In vain did I point out the monk as Edmée's assassin; they would not believe me, and said that they had no warrant against him. I tried to alarm the village, but they would not let me speak; they brought me here, from brigade to brigade, like a deserter, and for the last eight days I have been in a dungeon, without any one's condescending to listen to my complaints. I have not even been allowed to see M. Bernard's lawyer, or to inform him that I was in prison; it is only just now that the jailer came to tell me that I must put on a coat and appear. I do not know whether all this is legal, but it is certain that the assassin might have been arrested and is not, and that he will never be caught unless you secure the person of M. Jean de Mauprat, to keep him from warning, I do not say his accomplice, but his protégé. I take my oath that nothing which I overheard threw any suspicion of complicity upon M. Jean de Mauprat. As to his proceedings in allowing an innocent man to be delivered up to the rigor of the law, and in being so anxious to save a guilty one that he pretended that he was dead, giving false evidence, and making false declarations to that effect—"

Patience, seeing that the judge was about to interrupt him again, hastened to conclude his remarks, by saying,—

"As to that, gentlemen, it belongs to you, and not to me, to judge him."

XXVIII.

AFTER this important evidence, the court adjourned for a few moments, and, when it reopened, Edmée was placed upon the stand. Pale and languid, scarcely able to drag herself to the arm-chair that had been reserved for her, she showed, notwithstanding, great strength and presence of mind.

"Do you think you will be able to reply calmly, and without agitation, to the questions that will be asked you?" said the judge.

"I hope so, monsieur," she replied. "It is true that I have just been very ill, and that I have only recovered my memory during the last few days, but I think I have recovered it perfectly, and my mind does not feel at all confused."

"What is your name?"

"Solange Edmonde de Mauprat. *Edmea Sylvestris*," she added, in a low voice.

I trembled. Her face, as she uttered these superfluous words, assumed a strange expression. I thought her mind was going to wander more than ever. My council, alarmed, looked at me inquiringly. No one, excepting myself, understood these two words which Edmée had fallen into the habit of repeating frequently during the first and last days of her illness. Happily this was the last disturbance of her faculties. She shook her beautiful head as if to drive away importunate ideas, and when the judge demanded an explanation of her unintelligible words, she replied with sweetness and nobility, —

"It is of no consequence, monsieur; be so good as to continue my examination."

"Your age, mademoiselle?"

"Twenty-four years."

"Are you a relative of the accused?"

"His aunt *à la mode de Bretagne;* he is my second cousin, and my father's grand-nephew."

"Do you swear to speak the truth, the whole truth?"

"Yes, monsieur!"

"Hold up your hand."

Edmée turned to Arthur with a sad smile. He took off her glove and helped her to raise her arm gently and almost imperceptibly. I felt great tears rolling over my cheeks.

Edmée related with delicacy and simplicity that being lost in the woods with me, she had been thrown from her horse by the eager solicitude with which I had checked it, under the supposition that it was running away; that

this had given rise to a little dispute, in consequence of which, out of a little foolish feminine anger, she had wanted to mount her mare alone; that she had even spoken harshly to me, although she did not mean a word that she said, for she loved me like a brother; that, deeply wounded by her rudeness, I had withdrawn a few steps, as she ordered; and, just as she had been going to follow me, being grieved at our childish quarrel, that she had felt a violent concussion upon her chest, and had fallen, scarcely hearing the report. It was impossible for her to say which way she had turned, or from what direction the shot had been fired.

"That is all that happened," she added; "I am the last person, therefore, able to explain this accident. I can in my soul and conscience only attribute it to the awkwardness of one of our hunters, who is afraid to acknowledge the fact. The laws are so severe! and the truth is so difficult to prove."

"You do not think, then, mademoiselle, that it was your cousin who committed this outrage?"

"No, monsieur, certainly not! I am no longer out of my senses, and I should not have allowed myself to be brought before you if I had felt that my brain was disordered."

"You seem to impute the revelations that you made to Bonhomme Patience, to Mademoiselle Leblanc, your governess, and perhaps, also, to the Abbé Aubert, to a state of mental aberration?"

"I have made no revelation," she replied confidently, "either to the worthy Patience, to the respectable abbé, or to the servant Leblanc. If you call revelation the delirious words spoken in fever, you must condemn to death all those whose appearances frighten us in our dreams. What revelation could I have made about a fact which I know nothing of?"

"But you said, while falling from your horse, at the very moment that you were shot, 'Bernard, Bernard, I would never have believed that you could kill me.'"

"I do not remember saying that, and even if I did say it, I cannot conceive what importance can be attached to

the impressions of a person struck as if by a thunder bolt, and whose mind is for the time destroyed. I know, to a certainty, that Bernard de Mauprat would give his life for my father and for me, which does not make it very likely that he wanted to assassinate me. And why should he have done so, great God?"

The judge now, to embarrass Edmée, made use of all the arguments with which he had been furnished by the testimony of Mademoiselle Leblanc. They were, in fact, of sufficient importance to trouble her.

Edmée, surprised to find the court informed of so much that she supposed secret, resumed, notwithstanding her courage and pride, when they made her understand in the brutally chaste terms that are employed in such cases before tribunals, that she had been the victim of my violence at la Roche Mauprat. Undertaking with enthusiasm the defence of my character and of her honor, she affirmed that I had behaved with much greater propriety than could have been expected, from my education. But this was not enough; her whole life, after this epoch, had to be explained; the rupture of her marriage with M. de la Marche, her frequent quarrels with me, my sudden departure for America, her refusal to marry.

"This examination is an odious affair," she said, rising suddenly and recovering her physical strength, by making a mental effort. "You ask me to give an account of my inmost sentiments, you descend into the mysteries of my soul, you torture my modesty, you assume rights that belong only to God. I declare to you, if it was my life that was at stake and not that of another, you should not compel me to utter another word. But, to save the life of the humblest of men, I would conquer my repugnance; it stands to reason that I will do so for him who is before your eyes. Learn, then, the truth, since you force me to make an avowal contrary to the pride and reserve of my sex: everything which seems to you so inexplicable in my conduct, everything which you attribute to Bernard's offences and to my resentment, to his threats and to my terror, is justified by one word; — I love him!"

As she said these words with a blushing brow, and in

the truthful tone of the most passionate and proudly intense soul that ever lived, Edmée sat down again and covered her face with her hands. For my part, I was so transported, that, unable to contain myself, I cried out,—

"Now let me be led to the scaffold; I am king of the world!"

"To the scaffold! You!" said Edmée, again rising; "they shall rather lead me there myself. Is it your fault, unhappy child, that I concealed from you, for seven years, the secret of my affection,—that I wished to wait before revealing it, in order to tell you that you were the first of men in wisdom and intelligence, as you are the first in heart? You pay dearly for my ambition, since it is mistaken for scorn and hatred. You ought indeed to hate me, since my pride has caused you to be arraigned as a criminal. But I will wash out your shame by a startling reparation, and, even if you are sent to the scaffold to-morrow, you shall go there only with the title of my husband."

"Your generosity leads you too far, Edmée de Mauprat," said the judge; "to save your relative, you would almost consent to accuse yourself of coldness and cruelty; for how can you explain the seven years of refusal which have exasperated the passion of this young man?"

"Perhaps, monsieur," said Edmée, with vivacity, "the court is not a competent judge in this matter. Many women consider it no great crime to be a little coquettish with the man they love. They have perhaps this right, since they sacrifice all others to him; it is a natural and very innocent pride, that of wishing to make the one you prefer feel that you are a being of value, and deserve to be sought and wooed a long time. It is true, one would correct this coquetry very quickly if it resulted in causing a lover to be condemned to death. But it is impossible, gentlemen, that you will choose this means of consoling the poor young man for my cruelty."

While speaking thus, with an air of ironical excitement, Edmée burst into tears. This nervous sensibility, which brought into play all the qualities of her mind,—tenderness, courage, wit, pride, modesty,

the same time, to her countenance an expression so varied and so beautiful in all its changes, that even that grave and sombre band of judges was moved; for a moment they dropped their masks of impassible integrity, or hypocritical pretence of virtue, and felt like men. If Edmée had not defended me victoriously by her avowal, she had at least excited the highest degree of interest in my favor. A man loved by a beautiful and virtuous woman carries a talisman that renders him invulnerable; all feel that such a one's life has a higher value than that of others.

Edmée submitted to a great many more questions, and gave a true version of the facts distorted by Mademoiselle Leblanc: she spared me a great deal, it is true; but, careful not to commit herself, she showed the most admirable art in eluding certain questions, and avoiding the necessity of deceiving the court or condemning me. She generously accused herself of being to blame for all my offences, and declared that she had taken a secret pleasure in our quarrels, because, in my anger, I revealed to her the strength of my love; that she had let me depart for America wishing to put my courage to the proof, and not thinking that the campaign would last longer than a year,—the universal opinion at that time; that afterwards she had regarded me as bound in honor to submit to its indefinite prolongation, but that she had suffered more than I did from my absence. Finally, she recognized the letter that had been found on her person perfectly, and restored the mutilated passages with surprising accuracy, while begging the clerk to follow with her the half-effaced words.

"This letter is so far from being a threatening letter," she said, "and so far was it from inspiring me with fear and aversion, that it was found in my bosom, where I had worn it eight days, although I did not even acknowledge to Bernard that I had received it."

"But you do not explain," said the judge, "why, when your cousin first went to live with you, seven years ago, you should have armed yourself with a knife, which you put under your pillow every night, and which you caused to be sharpened, that you might be ready to defend yourself in case of emergency."

"In my family," she replied, blushing, "we are romantic, and very proud. It is true that I intended to kill myself several times, because I felt an irresistible love for my cousin springing up in my heart. Believing myself bound by an indissoluble engagement to M. de la Marche, I felt that it was impossible to break my word, and yet I would have died rather than marry any other man than Bernard. Later, M. de la Marche released me from my engagement with much delicacy and goodness, and I no longer thought of killing myself."

Edmée retired, followed by all eyes, and an approving murmur. Scarcely had she crossed the door of the court-room, when she fainted anew; but this attack was not serious, and left no traces after a few days.

I was so excited, so intoxicated by what she had just said, that I scarcely noticed any longer what was going on. Absorbed by the thought of my love, I still doubted; for if Edmée had not acknowledged all my violence, she might also have exaggerated her affection for me in the hope of extenuating my faults. It was impossible for me to believe that she could have loved me before my departure for America, and above all in the early days of my residence with her. My mind was exclusively preoccupied by this thought; I forgot even my cause, and the object of my trial. It seemed to me that the sole question agitated in this cold tribunal was this: Is he loved, or is he not loved? As far as I was concerned, triumph or defeat, life or death, depended upon the answer to this question.

I was aroused from these reveries by the voice of the abbé Aubert. He was thin and wasted, but perfectly calm; he had been kept in solitary confinement, and had suffered all the severities of the prison with the resignation of a martyr. In spite of all precautions, however, the adroit Marcasse, skilful as a ferret in slipping about, had succeeded in conveying to him a letter from Arthur, to which Edmée had added a postscript. Authorized by this letter to speak freely, he made a statement conformable to that of Patience, acknowledging that the words Edmée had spoken on being wounded had convinced him

for a time, of my guilt; but that afterwards, seeing the mental derangement of the invalid, and remembering my irreproachable conduct for more than six years, catching a gleam of light, also, from the previous trial, and the public rumors about the life and presence of Antoine de Mauprat, he had felt too convinced of my innocence to be willing to testify against me. If he did so now, it was in the belief that an additional examination had enlightened the court, and that his evidence would not have the grave consequences that it might have had a month before.

Questioned as to Edmée's sentiments in regard to me, he destroyed all the inventions of Mademoiselle Leblanc, and declared not only that Edmée loved me ardently, but that she had done so from our very first interview. He affirmed this by oath, at the same time that he dwelt a little more upon my past offences than Edmée had done. He acknowledged that he had often been afraid that she would commit the folly of marrying me, but that he had never had the least fear for her life; since she had always been able to control me by a word or look, even at the time of my greatest rudeness.

The continuation of the trial was put off until the conclusion of the search ordered for the discovery and arrest of the assassin. My trial was now likened to that of Calas; and this comparison had no sooner been made, than my judges, finding themselves exposed to a thousand sarcastic allusions, learned, through their own experience, that hatred and prejudice are bad counsellors and dangerous guides. The lord-lieutenant of the province declared himself the champion of my cause and the knight of Edmée, whom he reconducted to her father in person. He called out all the *maréchaussée;* they acted with vigor, and arrested Jean de Mauprat. When he found himself seized and threatened, he abandoned his brother, and declared that he might be found every night at la Roche Mauprat, concealed in a secret chamber, where the wife of the farmer gave him an asylum without her husband's knowledge.

The Trappist was conducted to la Roche Mauprat

under a strong guard, to point out this secret chamber; which, in spite of his genius in exploring walls and timber work, the old hunter of polecats, the mole-catcher Marcasse, had never succeeded in finding. They took me, also, to assist in finding it, or the passages leading to it, in case the Trappist should prove treacherous. Once again, therefore, I saw this detested manor in the presence of the ancient chief of the brigands transformed into a Trappist; he was so humble and cringing, so ready to sell his brother's life, and expressed himself to me in terms of such vile submission, that, seized with disgust, I begged him, after a moment, not to speak to me again. We set to work to discover the secret chamber, the guard keeping us in sight. Jean had pretended, at first, that he knew of its existence without knowing its precise situation, since three-fourths of the chateau had been destroyed. When he saw me, he remembered that I had surprised him in my room, and that he had disappeared by the wall. He resigned himself, therefore, to leading us to it, and showing us the secret, which was very curious, although I shall not amuse myself by describing it. The secret chamber was open, but no one was there. The expedition, however, had been conducted with speed and secrecy. It did not seem probable that Jean could have had time to warn his brother. The chateau was surrounded with horsemen, and all the outlets were well guarded. The night was gloomy, and the inhabitants of the farm were frightened to death at our invasion. The farmer could not understand what we were about, but the confusion and agony of his wife seemed to prove that Antoine was in the donjon. She did not have presence of mind enough to pretend to feel easy after we had explored the first chamber, and that made Marcasse think that there must be another of them. Was the Trappist aware of this, and was he feigning ignorance? He played his part so well, that we were all deceived. We had to explore anew all the nooks and crannies of the ruins. There was a great tower separated from all the other buildings, which did not seem as if it could have afforded refuge to any human being. The staircase

had tumbled down at the time of the fire, and there was no ladder long enough, by a great deal, even by tying together with ropes those belonging to the farm, to reach the upper story, which seemed to be well preserved, and which contained an apartment lighted by two loop-holes. Marcasse thought there might be a staircase in the wall itself, as was the case in many old towers. But where was the outlet? In some subterranean passage, perhaps. Would the assassin venture to quit his retreat while we were there? If he had become aware of our presence, in spite of the darkness of the night, and the silence we had preserved, would he risk himself in the open country while we were posted at all points?

"That is not probable," said Marcasse; "we must find a speedy means of getting up there, and I see one."

He pointed to a beam, blackened by the fire, which united the tower at a frightful height, over a distance of about twenty feet, to the garrets of a neighboring building. A great crevice, caused by the falling in of the adjoining parts, was at the end of this beam, in the side of the tower. In his explorations, Marcasse had often thought that he could see the steps of a little staircase through this crevice. The wall, besides, was thick enough to contain one. The mole-catcher had never ventured upon this beam, not on account of its narrowness, nor of its height, — he was accustomed to these dangerous passages, — but the beam had been on fire, and was so burned away in the middle that it was impossible to know whether it would support the weight of a man, even as slender and diaphanous as the brave sergeant. Hitherto there had not been any sufficient reason for risking his life in this experiment; it offered itself at this moment, and Marcasse did not hesitate. I was not near him when he determined to make this attempt, or I should have prevented it at every cost. I knew nothing about it until Marcasse was already in the middle of the plank, at the very spot where the calcinated wood might be nothing but charcoal. It is impossible for me to describe what I felt when I saw my faithful friend up there in the air, marching gravely to his goal. Blaireau was running be-

fore him, with as much tranquillity as if they had been going, as of old, amid bundles of hay, to hunt polecats and dormice. Day was dawning; and sharply defined in the gray twilight appeared the slender outline, and the modest but proud walk, of the hidalgo. I covered my face with my hands: it seemed to me that I could hear the fatal beam cracking; I repressed a cry of terror, in the fear of agitating him at this critical and decisive moment; but when I heard two shots fired from the tower, I could no longer help crying out and looking up. The first ball knocked off Marcasse's hat, the second grazed his shoulder. He had stopped.

"Not touched!" he cried to us.

Then, taking a leap, he crossed the rest of the aerial bridge swiftly. He entered the tower by the crevice, and leaped upon the staircase, crying,—

"Come on, friends; the beam is strong."

Immediately five bold and vigorous men, who had accompanied him, got upon the beam astride, and helping themselves with their hands, reached one by one the other extremity. When the first of them entered the garret to which Antoine de Mauprat had retreated, he found him struggling with Marcasse, who, carried away by his triumph, and forgetting that his business was not to kill the enemy, but to capture him, had undertaken to stab him, like a weasel, with his long sword. But the pretended Trappist had proved a formidable enemy: he had snatched the sword from the hands of the sergeant, had thrown him to the earth, and would have strangled him, if the others had not fallen upon him from behind. He resisted his first three assailants with prodigious strength; but with the help of the other two they succeeded in subduing him. When he saw that he was taken, he made no further resistance, and let them tie his hands and take him down the staircase, which was found to open in the bottom of a dry well, in the middle of the tower. Antoine had been in the habit of climbing up out of this well and going down into it by means of a ladder, which the farmer's wife held for him, and immediately afterwards withdrew. When the party rejoined us in safety, I threw myself with rapture into the arms of the sergeant.

"Nothing at all," he said; "nothing but play. I have found out that my foot is sure still, and my head cool. Ah! ah! old sergeant," — he added, looking at his leg, — "old hidalgo, old mole-catcher, — they will not make so many jokes any longer about your calves."

XXIX.

IF Antoine de Mauprat had been a man of energy, he might have injured me seriously by claiming to have been the witness of an assault made by me upon the person of Edmée. As he had reasons for hiding himself anterior to his last crime, he might have explained the mystery in which he had been enveloped, and his silence about the event of Gazeau Tower. I had no direct evidence in my favor excepting that of Patience. Would this have been enough to acquit me? This is by no means certain, since none of my friends, even those most eager to exculpate me, — even Edmée herself, — could deny my violent character, or explain all the circumstantial evidence that had been brought forward against me.

But Antoine, the most insolent in speech of all the Coupe-Jarrets, was the most cowardly in action. He no sooner saw himself in the power of the law than he made a full confession, even before knowing that his brother had abandoned him.

There was a scandalous trial, in which the two brothers accused each other in an infamous manner. The Trappist, always restrained by his hypocrisy, coldly abandoned the assassin to his fate, and defended himself against the charge of having advised his latest outrage; the other, becoming desperate, accused the Trappist of the most horrible crimes, and among them of having poisoned my mother and Edmée's mother, who had both died suddenly of a violent inflammation of the bowels. Jean de Mauprat was very skilful, he said, in the art of preparing poison, and he had introduced himself into the houses of his victims under different disguises, so as to mix it with their food. He declared that he had called a council of all his

brothers the day that Edmée had been brought to la Roche Mauprat, to deliberate upon the means of making way with this heiress, whose fortune he had already endeavored to get hold of by criminal methods. It was to this end that he had poisoned the wife of the Chevalier Hubert; and my mother had paid with her life the desire which the latter had expressed to adopt her son. All the Mauprats had been eager to get rid of Edmée and me with one blow, and Jean was preparing the poison with which to destroy us, when the *maréchaussée* made a diversion from this horrible design by attacking the chateau. Jean denied these accusations with horror, saying, humbly, that he had committed enough mortal sins of debauchery and irreligion, without having such crimes imputed to him. As they were difficult to admit, without an examination, on the word of Antoine,—as this examination was very nearly impossible, and as the clergy was too powerful and too much interested in preventing such a scandal to allow it,—Jean de Mauprat was acquitted of the accusation of being his brother's accomplice, and was merely sent back to la Trappe, with a prohibition from the archbishop ever to set his foot again into his diocese, and a request to his superiors not to allow him to leave his convent. He died a few years afterwards, in the transports of an exalted repentance, that almost took the form of insanity. He had feigned remorse, in the hope of obtaining some sort of social position, and probably, after failing in all his plans, he had really felt, at last, in the bosom of the austerities and terrible punishments of his order, the fright and agony of a bad conscience and late repentance. The fear of hell is the only faith of vile souls.

I was no sooner acquitted, reëstablished in public opinion, and set at liberty, than I hastened to Edmée; I arrived in time to be present at the death-bed of my uncle. He recovered, towards the last, not his memory of events, but that of his heart. He recognized me, pressed me to his heart, blessed me, together with Edmée, and put my hand into that of his daughter.

After we had paid the last duties to this excellent and noble parent, whose loss we felt as keenly as if we had

not long expected it, we left the country for some time, so as to be absent at the time of the execution of Antoine, who was condemned to the punishment of the wheel. The two false witnesses who had accused me were scourged, branded, and driven from the jurisdiction. Mademoiselle Leblanc, who could not precisely be accused of giving false evidence, as she had only distorted facts, and may in a measure have been self-deceived, withdrew from the hostile feeling of the community, and went to another province, where she lived in sufficient luxury to give rise to the suspicion that she had received considerable sums for her effort to destroy me.

We did not wish to be separated, even for a short time, from my excellent friends, my sole defenders, Marcasse, Patience, Arthur, and the abbé Aubert. We set out upon our journey in the same travelling carriage: the two former, accustomed to live in the open air, preferred to occupy the outside seats; but we took our meals at the same table; we placed them, in all respects, on a footing of perfect equality. Some persons had the bad taste to be surprised at this; but we let them talk. There are circumstances which radically efface all the imaginary or real distinctions of rank and education.

We visited Switzerland. Arthur considered this journey necessary to the complete reëstablishment of Edmée's health. The kind and thoughtful care of this devoted friend, and the happiness which we all endeavored to secure to Edmée by our affectionate attentions, contributed, not less than the beautiful spectacle of the mountains, to drive away her melancholy and efface the recollection of the storms through which we had just passed. Switzerland produced a magical effect upon the poetic brain of Patience. We were at the same time charmed and terrified at the state of ecstatic excitement into which he was often thrown. He was tempted to build a hut in the bottom of some valley, and pass the rest of his days there in the contemplation of nature; but his affection for us made him renounce this project. Marcasse declared afterwards, that he regarded this journey as the most fatal period of his life, in spite of the pleasure which he

had tasted in our society. At the hotel of Martigny, at the time of our return, Blaireau, whose old age made it difficult for him to digest his food, died a victim to the too generous welcome given him in the kitchen. The sergeant did not say a word; he gazed at him for some time with a gloomy expression, and then went and buried him in the garden, under the most beautiful rose-bush; he did not speak of his grief for more than a year.

During this journey, Edmée was truly angelic in her goodness and tenderness; abandoning herself henceforth to all the inspirations of her heart, feeling no longer any distrust of me, or saying that I had been sufficiently unhappy to deserve this compensation, she confirmed a thousand times the celestial assurances of love which she had given in public, when she raised her voice to proclaim my innocence. I must confess that certain reservations that had struck me in her evidence, and the recollection of the accusing words that she had uttered when Patience found her wounded, made me very unhappy for a long time. I thought, with reason, perhaps, that Edmée had found it difficult to believe in my innocence before the disclosures made by Patience. However, she closed my wound by saying, one day, with her charming brusqueness, —

"And if I loved you enough to absolve you in my heart and defend you before men at the cost of a lie,— what have you to say?"

I considered it no less important to learn how far I might rely upon the love which she pretended to have felt for me in the early days of our acquaintance. This troubled her a little; perhaps, in her invincible pride, she could not help feeling a certain regret on losing the exclusive possession of her secret. It was the abbé who undertook to make her confession, and to assure me that he had often scolded Edmée at that time, on account of her penchant for the young savage. As I urged, in opposition, the confidential conversation between Edmée and him which I had overheard one evening in the park, and which I repeated with the great accuracy of memory that I possess, he replied, —

"If you had followed us a little under the trees, you

would have heard, that very evening, a quarrel which would have completely reassured you, and would have explained to you how, from being antipathetic (I might almost say odious) to me, as you were, you became at first endurable, and, little by little, extremely dear."

"Tell me all," I cried; "whence came this miracle?"

"From one word," he replied; "Edmée loved you. When she had confessed the truth, she covered her face with her hands, and seemed for a moment overcome with shame and grief; then, suddenly, she raised her head:

"'Yes, it is true,' she cried, 'since you absolutely insist upon knowing it; I love him! I am smitten, as you say. It is not my fault — why, then, should I blush for it? I can do nothing; it came to me as if by a fatality. I have never loved M. de la Marche; I only feel friendship for him. For Bernard, I have a very different sentiment; a sentiment so strong, so changeable, so full of agitations, hate, fear, pity, anger and tenderness, that I understand nothing about it, and no longer try to do so.'"

"Oh woman! woman!" I cried, clasping my hands in amazement, "you are an abysm, — a mystery; and he who thinks that he knows you is three times a madman."

The abbé continued:

"'Whatever you may think of it, abbé,' she resumed with firmness, although embarrassed and agitated, 'it is the same to me. I have said to myself, on this point, more than you ever said to all your flocks in the whole course of your life. I know that Bernard is a bear, — a badger, as Mademoiselle Leblanc says; a savage, a boor, and anything else you choose. There is nobody more rough, quarrelsome, moody and wicked than Bernard; he is a brute who cannot sign his name; he is a gross man, who thinks that he can break me like a horse. He is very much mistaken: I will die rather than ever be his, at least unless he becomes civilized, in order to marry me. As well count upon a miracle. I try to improve him, without hoping to succeed. But although he forces me to kill myself or to become a nun, — although he remains what he is, or becomes worse, — it will be none the less true that I love him. Dear abbé, you know what this confession

must have cost me, and you ought not, when you see your friend penitent at your feet and in your bosom, to humiliate her by your exclamations and your exorcisms! Reflect, now; examine, discuss, decide! This is the evil: I love him! These are the symptoms: I think of no one else, see no one else, and I could not dine to-day because he did not come in. No one in the world is so beautiful in my eyes. When he says that he loves me, I see, I feel that it is true; and I am at the same time shocked and charmed. M. de la Marche is weak and pompous in comparison to Bernard. Bernard alone seems to me as proud, as passionate, as bold as I am, and as feeble, too, for he cries like a child when I irritate him; and see, I am crying now in thinking of him.'"

"Dear abbé," I cried, throwing myself upon his neck, "I will embrace you to death for remembering all that."

"The abbé is romancing," said Edmée, playfully.

"What!" I cried, pressing her hands as if to break them, "you have made me suffer for seven years, and you regret, now, a few words that console me."

"Do not regret the past," she said; "we should have been lost, if I had not had reason and strength for both. Great God! what would have become of us if we had married then? You would have suffered in a very different sort of way from my cruelty and pride; for you would have offended me from the very first day of our union, and I should have punished you by deserting you, or by killing myself, or killing you; for we kill in our family — it is a habit of childhood. It is perfectly certain that you would have made a detestable husband: you would have made me blush by your ignorance; you would have tried to oppress me, and we should constantly have come into collision; that would have driven my father to despair, and my father, you know, was my first thought. If I had been alone in the world I might have risked my own fate very recklessly, for my character is bold; but I was resolved that my father should be happy, calm, and respected. He had brought me up in happiness, in independence, and I would never have forgiven myself if I had deprived his old age of the

blessings which he had shed over my whole life. Do not believe that I am so good and great as the abbé pretends; I love, — that is all, — but I love strongly, exclusively, perseveringly. I sacrificed you to my father, my poor Bernard! and heaven, which would have cursed us if I had sacrificed my father, rewards us now by giving us to each other proved and invincible. In proportion as you were ennobled in my eyes, I grew patient, for I had the whole future in which to love you; I did not fear that my love would be extinguished before being fulfilled, like passions in feeble souls. We are two exceptional characters — we required heroic loves; the experiences of ordinary people would have made us both wicked."

XXX.

WE returned to Saint Sévère at the expiration of Edmée's mourning, — the time appointed for our marriage. We had imagined, on leaving this province, where we had both suffered such bitter mortifications and such great misfortunes, that we should never wish to see it again; but the memories of childhood, and the ties of domestic habits, are so strong, that, even in the bosom of an enchanting country, free from all bitter associations, we quickly regretted our sad and savage Varenne, and sighed after the old oaks of our park. We returned with a profound and respectful joy. Edmée's first care was to gather the most beautiful flowers of the garden, and scatter them over her father's grave. We kissed this sacred spot; and took an oath to do all that we could to leave a name as beloved and venerated as his. An excess of family pride had been the weakness of the chevalier, but it was a noble weakness and a holy vanity.

Our marriage was celebrated in the village chapel, and the wedding was strictly private; no one excepting Arthur, the abbé, Marcasse, and Patience were present at our simple banquet. We did not wish strangers to behold our happiness; they might, perhaps, have thought that they were doing us a favor by overlooking

the dark record of our family, and giving us their countenance. We could be happy and joyous among ourselves. Our hearts were overflowing with love. We were too proud to solicit the friendship of others, — too content with the friends we had to desire to form other intimacies. Patience returned to his cottage, and resumed, on certain days, his offices of Great Judge and treasurer; he would never consent to make any change in his sober and retired life. Marcasse remained near me until his death, which occurred towards the close of the French Revolution; I trust that I rewarded his services as far as it was possible, by an unreserved friendship and unclouded intimacy.

Arthur, who had given up a year of his life to us, could not make up his mind to forget for a longer time his love for his country, and desire of contributing to its elevation, by carrying to it the tribute of his learning, and the results of his travels. He departed for Philadelphia, where I went to visit him after I became a widower.

I shall not speak of the happiness that was mine with my noble and generous wife; such joys cannot be described. I have had to make constant efforts not to recall them too vividly, in order to live after being deprived of them. We had six children, four of whom are still living, and are well and prudently established. I flatter myself that they will complete the work of effacing the deplorable memory of their ancestors. I have lived for their sake, as Edmée commanded on her death-bed. Permit me not to allude otherwise to this loss, which I met with only ten years ago, — I feel it as deeply as on the first day that it occurred, and I do not try to console myself for it; my only desire is to make myself worthy, after accomplishing my time of trial here, to rejoin the saintly companion of my life in a better world. She was the only woman whom I have ever loved; never did any other attract my gaze, or know the pressure of my hand. I am made thus, — whom I love, I love eternally, in the past, in the present, in the future.

The storms of the revolution did not destroy [illegible]

fare, and the passions it aroused did not disturb the union of our domestic life. We willingly abandoned a great part of our property, in compliance with the laws of the Republic, and, in doing so, felt that we were only making a just sacrifice. The abbé, terrified at the blood that was shed, denied, at times, his political religion; the necessities of the time exceeded the strength of his soul. He was the Girondin of the family.

Edmée had more courage, without having less sensibility. A woman, and merciful, she suffered deeply for the miseries of all parties, — she wept all the misfortunes of her age; but she never denied its holy, if fanatical, grandeur. She remained faithful to her theories of absolute equality. At the time when the acts of the Mountain irritated the abbé, and made him desperate, she generously repressed her patriotic enthusiasm, and had the delicacy never to pronounce before him certain names which made him tremble, but which she venerated with a conviction firmer than I have ever seen in any other woman.

For my part, I can say that she educated me; during the whole course of my life, I have been constantly guided by her wisdom and integrity. When the desire of playing a popular part tempted my enthusiasm, she checked me by representing that my name would paralyze all my influence over a class who would distrust me, and would imagine that I was desirous of leaning upon them, in order to regain my rank. When the enemy was at the gates of France, she sent me to serve in the army as a volunteer; when a military career became the road of ambition, and the Republic was annihilated, she recalled me to her side, saying, —

"You must leave me no more."

Patience played a great part in the Revolution. He was named, unanimously, judge of his district. His integrity, his impartiality in judging between the chateau and the hut, his firmness and his wisdom, have left ineffaceable recollections in Varenne.

In the course of the war, I had occasion to save the life of M. de la Marche, and to assist him in making his escape to a foreign country.

These, I believe (said old M. de Mauprat), are all the events of my life, in which Edmée played a part. The rest are not worth the trouble of relating. If there is anything good and useful in this narrative, profit by it, young people. Desire, above all things, to have a frank counsellor, a severe friend; and do not love those who flatter, but those who correct you. Do not believe too much in phrenology; for my bump of murder is very large, and we are born killing in our family, as Edmée used to say, in her days of melancholy gayety. Do not believe in fatality, or at least exhort no one to abandon himself to it. This is the moral of my history.

Having thus spoken, the aged Bernard gave us a good supper, and continued to converse, without confusion or fatigue, during a part of the evening. We had begged him to develop what he called the moral of his story a little more; and he entered then into general reflections, which were remarkable for their clearness and good sense.

I spoke to you of phrenology (he said), not to criticise a system that has a value in so far as it tends to complete the series of physiological observations, which are constantly adding to our knowledge of man. I made use of the word phrenology, because the only fatality in which we believe in our day, is that created for each person by his instincts. I do not consider phrenology as more fatalistic than any system of this kind; and Lavater, accused also of fatalism in his time, was the most Christian man whom the Gospel has ever formed.

Do not believe in any absolute and necessary fatality, my children, and yet admit that there is something irresistible in the sway that is exerted by our instincts and faculties, by the first impressions received, and spectacles beheld in infancy; in a word, by the whole phenomenal world presiding over the development of the soul. Admit that we are not always absolutely free to choose between good and evil, if you wish to be indulgent to the guilty: that is to say, just as heaven; for there is much mercy in

the judgments of God, otherwise His justice would be incomplete.

What I tell you here is not, perhaps, very orthodox; but it is Christian, I answer for it, because it is true. Man is not born wicked; he is not born good either, as Jean Jacques Rousseau thinks, — the old master of my dear Edmée. Man is born with more or less of passions, with more or less strength to satisfy them, and with more or less ability for turning them to a good or a bad account in society. But education can and ought to find a remedy for everything; the great problem to be solved is to find the proper education for each individual. It seems necessary that education should be universal, and in common; does it follow that it should be the same for all? I can readily believe that I would have been tractable earlier, if I had been sent to college at ten years old; but would they have corrected my violent impulses in a public institution, and have taught me to conquer them as Edmée did? I doubt it. We all need to be loved in order that the good in us may be devoloped, but we need to be loved each differently, one with unwearying indulgence, another with steady severity. In the meanwhile, until the problem of an education common to all, and yet appropriate to each individual, is solved, make it your business to improve each other.

You ask me how? My reply will be short: By loving each other truly. It is in this way that you will succeed, as manners act upon laws, in suppressing the most odious and impious of all laws, that of retaliation, — capital punishment, — which is nothing else than the consecration of the principle of fatality, since it assumes that the offender is incorrigible, and Heaven implacable.

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